# THE HEATHER-MOON

C.N. & A.M. Williamson

SP-8947

# THE HEATHER MOON

## BY THE SAME AUTHORS

LORD LOVELAND DISCOVERS AMERICA
ROSEMARY IN SEARCH OF A FATHER
LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER
MY FRIEND THE CHAUFFEUR
THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR
THE GUESTS OF HERCULES
THE PRINCESS VIRGINIA
THE GOLDEN SILENCE
THE CAR OF DESTINY
THE MOTOR MAID
THE CHAPERON
SET IN SILVER

# THE HEATHER MOON

*by* C.N. & A.M. Williamson

Authors Of

"The Lightning Conductor" Etc.

Garden City, New York

Doubleday, Page & Co.

1912

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DEDICATED

BY

C. N. AND A. M. W.

To all Scots, wherever they may be,
And to the land they love when near or long for, far away.

"Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand?"

SIR WALTER SCOTT

# BOOK I
# THE PRELUDE: AND THE PEOPLE

# I

FOR the first time in her life, Barrie saw the door that led to the garret stairs standing ajar. It was always, always locked, as is correct, though irritating, for a door that leads to Fairyland.

In Barrie's Outer Life that her grandmother knew, and Miss Hepburn knew, and Mrs. Muir the housekeeper knew, there was — Heaven be praised!—no romance at all; for romance is an evil thing, still worse, a frivolous thing, which may be avoided for a well-brought-up girl though whopping-cough may not; and already this same evil had wrought vast damage among the MacDonalds of Dhrum. In the Inner Life of Barrie, however, there was nothing worth thinking about except romance; and the door of the garret stairs was one of the principal roads to the forbidden land.

She stopped in front of it. At first she could not believe her eyes. Her heart had given a glorious bound, which, only to have felt once in its full ecstasy, was worth the bother of being born into a family where there were no mothers or fathers, but only — ah, what an awesome only! — grim old Grandma MacDonald and Grandma MacDonald's grim old house where Carlisle ends and moorlands begin.

It is difficult to be sure of things when your heart is beating nineteen to the dozen, and the special thing, or

mirage of a thing, seems — judging from all else that has happened in Outer Life — much too good to be true. Yet there it was, that streak of dull, mote-misted gold, painting what actually appeared to be a crack between the dark frame of the door and the dark old door itself — just such gold as Barrie had seen at least once a day ever since she could remember (except when mumps and measles kept her in bed) by applying an eye to the keyhole. "Fairy gold" she had named it.

The only person who ever went into the garret was Mrs. Muir, and though she had the air of making no secret of such expeditions, it had always struck Barrie as deliciously, thrillingly strange that invariably she turned the key of the stairway door upon herself the instant she was on the other side, and religiously performed the same ceremony on letting herself out. "Ceremony" really was the word, because the key was large, ancient, and important-looking, and squeaked sepulchrally while it turned. Barrie knew all this, because in spring and autumn, when Mrs. Muir paid her visits to fairylands forlorn beyond the oak door, Barrie lurked under cover of the convenient, thick, and well-placed shadow behind the grandfather clock on the landing.

It was not autumn now, which was part of the mystery, after these endless years of routine (they seemed endless to Barrie at eighteen), and she would certainly have missed the event had this not been her keyhole hour.

Somehow she had become aware — through heredity and race memory, no doubt — that looking through keyholes was caddish, a trick unworthy of any lady who was at heart a gentleman. But there are exceptions to all

keyholes, and this was one, because, as none save ghosts and fairies lived or moved behind it in the garret, there was nobody to spy upon. You looked through to stimulate the romance in your starved soul and save it from death by inanition, because if romance died, then indeed the Outer Life at Hillard House would be no longer bearable.

Barrie paid her respects to the keyhole o' mornings, for two reasons. The first and commonplace reason was because Mrs. Muir was busy downstairs and had no eye to spare to see whether other eyes were glued to the wrong places. The second and more charming reason was because in the morning the golden haze floated behind the keyhole like shimmering water with the sun shining deep into it. By afternoon there was nothing left to peer into but cold gray shadow, which meant that the fairies and other inhabitants were not at home.

Mrs. Muir's motive for visiting the garret out of season was a simple one, but it was well that Barrie did not know this, for it was not at all interesting, and would have broken the music, thrown cold water on the thrill. Moths, no respecters of persons or judges of high religious reputations, had dared to nest in Mrs. MacDonald's best black cashmere dress, which had not been worn and would not be worn, except on great occasions, until next season, and had mechanically reduced it to the rate of second best. Moth-powder and moth-balls were exhausted in downstairs regions, but there was a store of both in the garret; and in her annoyance at having to ascend at an unprecedented time, and her vexation at an accident such as must happen in the best regulated families, Mrs. Muir had hurriedly

returned with the wanted box, forgetting to lock the door.

Barrie could not be sure that the housekeeper was not even now in the garret; but she had to find out: and the awful thrill of uncertainty made her next step a high adventure, the adventure of her life. It was a step onto the garret stairs, and though it meant dangers of all sorts, she risked them every one, and closed the door behind her. You see, if she had not done this, any person passing along the landing — a person such as Grandma, or Janet Hepburn — would at once have seen the streak of gold, a mere yellow crack to them, and then and there would have arisen a clamour for the key.

Even with the door closed the risk remained in a lesser degree. Mrs. Muir, if she were not at this moment in the garret, might suddenly remember that she had left the door ajar, taking away the key; then she would rush back like a stout round whirlwind, and in a minute more Barrie would be a prisoner, almost like the fair bride in "The Mistletoe Bough," only there was more air in the garret than in the oak chest that shut with a spring. But Barrie was used to taking risks — risks insignificant compared with this, yet big enough to supply salt and sugar for the dry daily bread of existence.

The door shut softly, but — mercy, what creaks those steps had in them! They seemed to be vying with each other, the heartless brutes, as to which could shriek the loudest under a girl's light foot. Probably they had never seen a girl before, or if they had, it was so long ago they had forgotten. Fancy Grandma a girl! No wonder, if the steps remembered her, that they yelled —— But by

this time Barrie's head had arrived at the top of the steep stairs, and her eyes were peering cautiously through clouds of gold dust along the level of a floor, mountainous in its far horizon with piled chests, trunks, and furniture.

The gold poured through three very high, small dormer-windows which until now Barrie had known only from outside, staring up at the ivied house wall from the east garden. The dust lived in the garret air, and was different from, more wonderful and mysterious than, any other dust, except perhaps the dust far off in the distance at sunset, where motor-cars you could not see passed along a road invisible.

Barrie couldn't be quite certain at first whether the garret was empty of human life, or whether Mrs. Muir was likely to pounce upon her with reproaches from behind one of those immense oak posts which went up like trees to meet the high beamed roof. Or she might be concealed by an oasis of furniture. There were several such oases in the large wilderness of garret, which covered the whole upper story of the old house. But a lovely garret it was, a heavenly garret! even better than Barrie had dreamed it might be, with her eye at the keyhole of the stairway door. It was peopled with possibilities — glorious, echoing, beckoning possibilities — which made her heart beat as she could not remember its beating before.

She climbed the remaining steps regardless of squeaks, because she could not any longer bear the suspense concerning Mrs. Muir. Nothing moved in answer to the old wood's complainings, and there was no other sound, or rather there were no real sounds such as are made by

people; but when Barrie reached the head of the stairs the whole garret was full, to her ears, of delicate rustlings and whisperings, sighs and footfalls and breathings, and scurryings out of sight.

No, Mrs. Muir was not here, or by this time she would be out in the open and scolding hard.

Barrie drew in deep breaths of the strange, still atmosphere which was like air that had been put to sleep years and years ago. It must have smelt exactly like this, she thought quietly, in the lost palace of La Belle Dormante when the Prince found his way in through barricading thickets. Barrie would hardly have been surprised if she had stumbled upon a Sleeping Beauty. If she had, she would have said to herself, "So that's the secret Mrs. Muir's been hiding, by keeping the door locked up. I *told* you so!"

The scent of the garret fascinated Barrie, and made her heart beat heavily, as if she were on the threshold of a mystery. It was made up of many odours: a faint, not unpleasant mustiness, the smell of dust, a perfume of old potpourri, and spices, cloves, and camphor for moths, a vague fragrance of rosewood and worm-eaten oak, a hint of beeswax, a tang of unaired leather and old books.

Barrie suddenly felt perfectly happy. For to-day this wonderful place with all its secrets was hers. She hardly knew what to explore first. All the really interesting things in the house seemed to have risen to the top, like cream on milk. Along a part of one wall opposite the stairs and under the east windows whence came the morning gold were ranged rough old bookcases, a kind of almshouse for indigent books, or a prison for condemned

volumes. But what books! Barrie was drawn to them as by many magnets, and almost tremulously taking down one after another, she understood the reason of their banishment. Here were all the darling books which used to live down in the library, and had been exiled because she dipped into them, they being (according to Grandma and Miss Hepburn) "most unsuitable for nice-minded girls." Barrie had mourned her friends as dead, but they had been only sleeping. And there were others, apparently far more unsuitable for nice-minded girls — old leather-bound books with quaint wood engravings and thick yellow pages printed with old-fashioned "s's" like "f's." Barrie could have browsed among this company for hours, but there were so many things to see in the garret, so little time for seeing them, that she felt compelled merely to say "How do you do, and good-bye," to each allurement.

Her eyes, roaming like a pair of crusading knights in search of romance, lighted suddenly on a pile or group of furniture in a distant corner. There was other furniture in the garret, certainly more interesting to a connoisseur and hunter of antiquities; but Barrie was neither. She had contrived to seize upon a good deal of queer miscellaneous knowledge outside lesson hours, yet she did not know the difference between Sheraton and Hepplewhite. Chairs and sideboards and settees of Georgian days and earlier had been relegated to this vast pound of unwanted things, while their places were dishonourably filled downstairs by mid-Victorian monstrosities which Mrs. MacDonald instinctively approved, no doubt because they could offer no temptation to the eye. Barrie might have felt the beauty of the graceful lines if she had given

her attention to these scattered relics of a past before there was a Grandma; but a group of very different furniture beckoned her curiosity.

The fact that there was a group, and that it seemed in the dimness to be alike in colour and design, suggested mystery of some sort; and, besides, it was almost impossible to imagine such furniture adorning this house.

Evidently it had been taken bodily out of one room. Why? As she asked herself this question Barrie threaded her way delicately along narrow paths between chairs, extraordinary leather or hairy cowhide trunks and thrilling bandboxes of enormous size, made quaintly beautiful with Chinese wall-paper. She wanted to examine the grouped furniture whose pale coverings and gilded wood glimmered attractively even in the darkest corner of the garret.

It certainly was the darkest and farthest. Was this a coincidence, or had there been a special reason for huddling these things out of sight? There was not even a clear path to them, though there seemed to have been method in planning most of the lanes that led from one luggage or furniture village to another. Nothing led to this village built against a wall. Its site was in a no-thoroughfare, and, perhaps by design, perhaps by accident, a barricade had been erected before it; not a very high barricade, but a wall or series of stumbling-blocks made up of useless litter. If there could be a special corner of disgrace in this land where all things were under decree of banishment, here was the corner.

By means of crawling over, under, and between numerous strangely assorted objects which formed the barricade,

the intruder arrived, somewhat the worse for wear, at her destination. The furniture village was composed, she discovered, of a set of blue satin-covered chairs and sofas, with elaborately carved and gilded frames. There were tables to match, and an empty glass cabinet, two long mirrors with marble brackets underneath, also a highly ornamental chest of drawers and a bedstead of gilded cane and wood, with cupids holding garlands of carved roses.

Barrie began talking to herself half aloud, according to long-established habit. "Good gracious me!" she exclaimed so inelegantly that it was well Miss Hepburn could not hear. "What things to find in this house! They're like — like canary birds in an ironmonger's shop. Who could have owned them?"

Suddenly the answer flashed into her head, and sent the blood to her face as if she had received a stinging slap such as Grandma used to give: "These things were my mother's!"

How insulting that these traces of the vanished one should have been hustled into a dingy hole where no self-righteous eyes could be offended by the sight of them! How frivolous and daintily young they looked, even in their dusty and (Barrie was furiously sure) undeserved disgrace! This was the secret of the locked garret!

The girl occasionally had moments of hatred for Grandma: moments when she thought it would have delighted her to see the grim old Puritan scoffed at and humiliated, or even tortured. At the picture of torture, however, Barrie's heart invariably failed, and in fancy she rescued the victim. But never had she hated Mrs. MacDonald so actively as now.

"My mother!" she said again. "How dared the wicked old creature be such a brute to her!"

For Barrie was certain that these were relics of her mother's presence in the house. She knew the history of every other woman who had ever lived here since the place was built in the seventeenth century by an Alexander Hillard, an ancestor of Grandma's. A forbidding old prig he must have been, judging from the portrait over the dining-room mantelpiece, a worthy forbear of Ann Hillard, who had married Barrie's grandfather, John MacDonald of Dhrum. Barrie often said to herself that she did not feel related to Grandma. She wanted to be all MacDonald and — whatever her mother had been. But it was just that which she did not know, and not a soul would tell. This was her grievance, the great and ever-burning grievance as well as mystery of her otherwise commonplace existence; a conspiracy of silence which kept the secret under lock and key.

Because of Mrs. MacDonald's "taboo," Barrie's mother had become her ideal. The girl felt that whatever Grandma disapproved must be beautiful and lovable; and there had been enough said, as well as enough left unsaid whenever dumbness could mean condemnation, to prove that the old woman had detested her daughter-in-law.

All Barrie knew about the immediate past of her family was that her father's people had once been rich, and as important as their name implied. They were the MacDonalds of Dhrum, an island not far from Skye, but they had lost their money; and while old Mrs. MacDonald was still a young married woman (it seemed incredible that she could have been young!) she and her husband, with

their one boy, had come to her old home near Carlisle. This one boy had grown up to marry — Somebody, or, according to the standards of Grandma, Nobody, a creature beyond the pale. The bride must have died soon, for even Barrie's elastic memory, which could recall first steps taken alone and first words spoken unprompted, had no niche in it for a mother's image, though father's portrait was almost painfully distinct. It presented a young man very tall, very thin, very sad, very dark. The frame for this portrait was the black oak of the library wainscoting, picked out with the faded gold on backs of books in a uniform binding of brown leather. Once a day Barrie had been escorted by her nurse to the door of the library and left to the tender mercies of this sad young man, who raised his eyes resignedly from reading or writing to emit a "How do you do?" as if she were a grown-up stranger. After this question and a suitable reply, not much conversation followed, for neither could think of anything to say. After an interval of strained politeness, the child was dismissed to play or lessons — generally lessons, even from the first, for play had never been considered of importance in Hillard House. It was nobler, in the estimation of Grandma, and perhaps of father, to learn how to spell "the fat cat sat on the black rug," rather than to sprawl personally on the black rug, sporting in company with the fat cat.

One day, Barrie remembered, she had been told that father was ill and she could not bid him good morning. She had been treacherously glad, for father was depressing; but when days passed and she was still kept from him, it occurred to her that after all father was much, much nicer

than Grandma, and that his eyes, though sad, were kind. The next and last time she ever saw him, the kind sad eyes were shut, and he was lying in a queer bed, like a box. He was white as a doll made of porcelain which he had once given her, and Grandma, who led the child into his room, said that he was dead. The sleeping figure in the box was only the body, and the soul had gone to heaven. Heaven, according to Grandma, who wore black and had red rims round her eyes, was a place high up above the sky where if you were a sheep you played constantly on a harp and sang songs. If you were a goat, you did not get there at all, which might have been preferable, except for the fact that being a goat doomed you to burn in everlasting fire. Sheep were saved, goats were damned; and, of course, the sheep must be deserving and clever if they had learned to sing and play on harps.

Barrie thought she could have been no more than three when her father died, but she never cared to question Grandma concerning the episode, after a day when Mrs. MacDonald said in an icy voice, "Your mother was before God guilty of your father's death." That was years ago now, but Barrie had not forgotten the shock, or the hateful, thwarted feeling, almost like suffocation, when Grandma had answered an outbreak of hers with the words, "The less you know about your mother the better for you. And the less like her you grow up, the more chance you will have of escaping punishment in this world and the next."

Barrie believed that her mother's hair must have been red, for once she had heard nurse say to Mrs. Muir, "No wonder the sight of the child's a daily eyesore to the

mistress; what with them identical dimples, and hair of the selfsame shade, it must be a living reminder of what we'd all be glad to forget." Barrie's hair was extremely red; and it had been intimated to her that no red-haired girl could have cause for vanity, because to such unfortunates beauty was denied; but loyalty to the unknown mother forbade the child to hate her copper-coloured locks.

In a room decorated with pale blue satin, red hair might perhaps simulate gold. The furniture was quite new-looking and unless there had been some special reason, no mere change of taste would have induced economical Grandma to make a clean sweep of these practically unused things.

A tall mirror with its wooden back turned outward helped to screen the furniture; and deep under the dusty surface of the glass Barrie saw her own figure dimly reflected, like a form moving stealthily in water beneath thin ice. It half frightened her, like seeing a spirit, and she brought the gliding ghost to life by polishing the glass. This gave her back suddenly the only friend she had, herself, and she was glad of the companionship. Close to the huddled furniture stood a large trunk, a Noah's Ark of a trunk. Perhaps it was old-fashioned, but compared to other luggage stored here in the garret it was new and defiantly smart. It had a rounded top, and was made of gray painted wood clamped with iron.

Too good to be true that it should not be locked! And yes, locked it was, of course. But tied to the iron handle on one end was a key. It seemed as if some one had thought that the trunk might be sent for, and therefore the key must be kept handy. The knot was easily undone. The

key fitted the lock. Her heart beating fast, Barrie lifted the lid, and up to her nostrils floated a faint fragrance. She had never smelled any perfume quite like it before. The nearest thing was the scent of a certain rose in the garden when its petals were dried, as she dried them sometimes for a bowl in her own room.

It was deep twilight in this corner, but Barrie's eyes were accustoming themselves to the gloom. In the tray of the big trunk there were hats, and masses of something fluffy and soft, yet crisp like gauze. "My mother's things!" she said to herself in a very little voice, with a catch of the breath at the word "mother." And gently she lifted out the tray, to carry it nearer the light. There was a cart-wheel of a Leghorn hat in it, wreathed with cornflowers; another hat of white tulle trimmed with a single water-lily, and a queer little bonnet made of forget-me-nots. The fluffy stuff was a large blue scarf spangled with pinkish sequins.

Barrie rested the tray on a marble-topped table, and dipped deep into the trunk for other treasures. There were several dresses, of delicate materials and pale shades, or else of daring colours elaborately trimmed. There was a gown of coral-tinted satin embroidered with gold, and this was of Empire fashion, so like the styles which Barrie saw in illustrated papers that it might have been made yesterday. Could a red-haired woman have chosen to wear such a colour? For a moment the girl doubted that these had been her mother's possessions; but when she held the folds of satin under her own chin, she was startled by the picture in the mirror. Why, coral was far more becoming than blue, which Miss Hepburn always said was

the only colour to go with red hair. It even occurred to Barrie that she might perhaps be — well, almost pretty.

"What if I *am* pretty, after all?" she asked herself; for she worshipped beauty, and it had been sad to feel that to her it was denied forever — that never could she be like one of those lovely beings in books with whom men fall desperately in love, and for whom they gladly die.

In great excitement she took off her short, badly made blue serge, and put on the coral satin, which was low in the neck, and had tiny puffed sleeves. The dress fastened at the back, but Barrie had grown clever in "doing up" her own frocks without help, and she easily managed the few hooks and eyes. The satin was creased, but in the dim light it looked fresh and beautiful as the petals of some gorgeous flower, and the long, straight-hanging gown with magic suddenness turned the childlike girl into a young woman. The two massive tails of hair which fell over Barrie's shoulders, ending in thick curls at her waist, now offended her sense of fitness. They were not "grown up" enough to suit the wearer of this fairy robe; and crossing the braids at the back of her head, she brought them round it over her ears, tying the two curls together in a sort of bow at the top.

"I'm like Cinderella dressed for the ball," she thought, "all except the glass slippers," and she glanced down distastefully at the thick, serviceable boots whose toes pointed out from under a line of gold embroidery.

There must once have been shoes to match this dress. Perhaps they were at the bottom of the big trunk, whose depths she had not yet reached. Bending down for another search, she caught sight of something in the back-

ground which she had not seen — a large picture with its face against the wall.

Instantly Barrie forgot the shoes. Her heart jumped as it had jumped when she first saw the key in the door of the garret stairs. Would they have turned to the wall in this dark corner any picture save one? The girl knew that in another moment she would be looking at the portrait of her mother.

To get at it, she had to shut the trunk and climb on the rounded lid, for the big wooden Noah's Ark was too heavy to lift, and too firmly wedged in among large pieces of furniture to be pushed out of the way. Kneeling on the trunk, regardless of her finery, Barrie grasped the picture frame with both hands and pulled it up from its narrow hiding-place. Then, scrambling down, she backed out into a space clear enough to permit of turning the picture. round. Then she could not help giving a little cry, for it seemed that she was beholding a miracle. Her own face, her own figure, the very dress she wore, and the odd way she had looped up her red braids, were repeated on the dusty canvas.

It seemed too wonderful to be true, yet it was true that she had chosen to put on the gown in which its owner had long ago stood for her portrait. And the knotted curls just above the picture-forehead were like little ruddy leaping flames.

Just at first glance Barrie thought that she was exactly like the picture; but when she had wiped the dust off the canvas, and saw the painting clearly, she began to realize and count the differences. The portrait was that of a young woman, not a girl still almost a child. Knowledge

and love of the world glittered in the great dark eyes which turned up ever so slightly at their outer corners in a curiously bewitching way. Barrie's eyes were dark too, but they were hazel, and could look gray or even greenish yellow in a bright light; but the eyes in the picture were almost black, and full of a triumphing consciousness of their own fascination. The artist had hinted at dimples, and these Barrie's cheeks repeated; but the girl's face was in shape a delicate oval, though the chin was as firm as if a loving thumb and finger had pinched it into prominence. The face on the canvas was fuller, shorter, squarer, and its chin was cleft in the middle. The mouth was smaller and more pouting — a self-conscious, petulant mouth; but Barrie thought it beautiful, with its flowerlike, half-smiling red lips.

"Mother — mother!" she said, "darling, lovely mother! Oh, if you could only talk to me! If you could only tell me all about yourself!"

As she spoke aloud something moved in the garret: a board creaked, a struck chair or table scraped along the uneven floor, and Mrs. Muir appeared round a corner of the piled furniture. Barrie stiffened herself, standing up straight and tall and defiant, ready for battle, holding the portrait as if it were a shield. But she was not prepared to see Mrs. Muir start back, stumbling against something which fell with a sharp crash, nor to hear her give vent to a squeal of terror. It was anger the girl had expected to rouse, not fear, and she faced the old housekeeper from her distance in blank astonishment.

They stood staring at each other across the shadows lit by floating motes of gold; and Mrs. Muir's large, pallid

face looked, Barrie thought, as if it had been turned to gray stone, the gray stone of the carved monuments in the family burial-ground. For a moment neither spoke, but at last some words seemed to drop from the old woman's mouth, rather than be deliberately uttered:

"May God have mercy on me!"

"What *is* the matter?" Barrie exclaimed, the strange spell broken; but instead of answering, Mrs. Muir gasped, and then broke out crying, a queer gurgly sort of crying which frightened the girl. She did not dislike the housekeeper, and she was so genuinely distressed as well as surprised at this strange exhibition, that she would have set down the portrait to run to Mrs. Muir's succour if at that moment the stillness of the garret had not been wakened by the tap, tap of a stick. Somebody was coming up the stairs, hobbling, limping, yet hurrying with extraordinary energy.

There was only one person in the house, or maybe in the world, whose coming made that noise, that mingled hobble, rush, and tap: Grandma.

Barrie and Mrs. Muir continued to stare at one another, but their expression had changed. The approach of a danger to be shared in common had made the enemies friends. "This is going to be awful. What shall we do?" the old eyes said to the young and the young eyes said to the old. Mrs. Muir had forgotten her burning wish and intention to scold Miss Barribel; nevertheless, the housekeeper was not to be trusted as an ally. Under the lash of Mrs. MacDonald's tongue she would defend herself, and Barrie would go to the wall. But the spirit of the martyr was in the girl, and when the first dread thrill of

the tap, tap on the garret stairs had subsided in her nerves, she remembered her wrongs and her mother's wrongs, and was not afraid of Grandma. She girded herself for war.

The tapping came nearer. Mrs. MacDonald was grievously crippled with rheumatism. Only a strong incentive could have urged her up the steep straight stairway, with its high steps; but Grandma was indomitable. Lurching like a ship in a heavy sea, she swept round the corner and brought herself to anchor by planting her stick with a crash on the wavy oak floor. There she stood, the grim and hard old craft that had weathered a hundred storms and refused to be dismayed by any. She must have been alarmed by the housekeeper's scream and the crash of falling furniture, and the figure in the coral satin dress was at least as startling for her as for her old servant; but she gave no cry, and her face looked as it always looked, hard, and stern, and passionless, as her gray eyes travelled from granddaughter to housekeeper, from housekeeper to granddaughter.

"What is the meaning of this?" she inquired in her worst voice, which Barrie always thought like the turning of a key in an unoiled lock.

"This, ma'am?" quavered Mrs. Muir, unused to the pangs of guilty fear, and bitterly ashamed of them. "Why, I'd been up here getting some more moth-balls out of the chemist's store-box, and while I was gone Miss Barribel ——"

"You must have left the stairway door unlocked, woman."

"For the first time in my life, ma'am, I did." The

answer was an appeal for justice if not mercy. It was an awful thing to be called "woman" by the mistress, and to be impaled on that sharp gray gaze never sheathed behind spectacles. Mrs. Muir was not one to quail easily, but she had been at fault, and she realized how her small sin of omission was leading up to consequences more momentous than anything which had happened in this house for seventeen years. In a flash she remembered, too, that it was just seventeen years ago this month of August since the first wearer of the coral satin had gone forever.

"That is no excuse," said Mrs. MacDonald. "There are some things it is a sin to forget. Locking the garret door is one, you well know why. Now the mischief is done."

"Who'd ha' dreamed, ma'am, that Miss Barribel would ha' bin on the watch like a cat for a mouse ——"

"It's no question of dreaming, but experience. You ought to know as well as I do that unfortunately the girl is always on the watch for anything she ought not to see or do. It is in her blood. These many years I have struggled to crush down inherited tendencies, and keep her on the straight path I would have her father's daughter tread. Yet how have I succeeded? Every day shows how little. This is only one instance among many."

The pale cold eyes, having chilled Mrs. Muir's blood, turned to do their work of icing Barrie into subjection; but the girl's veins ran fire. For once, Grandma was powerless to make her feel a frozen worm.

"I wish I'd known before that my mother's things were here," she said, in a clear, loud voice. "I'd have broken down the door to get to them. They're mine — all mine. I will have them."

"You will not," Mrs. MacDonald answered. "Set that portrait back where you found it with its face to the wall. Take off that immodest, outrageous dress, and put on your own decent one. Fold up the scarlet abomination and lay it in the trunk with the rest of the brood."

Somehow that word "brood" in connection with her lost mother's gay, pretty garments made Barrie see her grandmother through a red haze. "It's the things you say, not mother's lovely clothes, that are exactly like a brood of horrid, ugly imps!" she cried. "Always you've kept everything about her a secret from me, but you can't go on doing it now. I've seen her beautiful picture. I know it's hers without any telling. Nothing can make me believe it isn't, no matter what you say, either of you. So you may as well tell me all about her. I won't move till you do."

"So be it, then," said Mrs. MacDonald in an iron voice. "The time had to come some day. Let it be to-day, though for your father's sake I would have spared you the knowledge until you reached your twenty-first year. Do not flatter yourself that your threat 'not to move' has the smallest effect on me. It has none. If I chose, I could force you to obey me this instant, and put those reminders of sin out of my sight. But if you have any sense of shame in you, any affection for your father's memory, it will be the severest punishment I can inflict to tell you the truth while you are wearing that dress and looking at the face of that portrait."

Despite her inward flame of fury, which did not wane, the girl was struck into silence by her grandmother's tone and manner. She stood very still and white in the coral satin.

"You can go now, Muir," said Mrs. MacDonald. "What is to come must be between me and my son's child."

Without a word the housekeeper turned and went away. Perhaps she was glad to escape. And now that her own scolding was over, there was sympathy in the last look she threw the girl.

There was a certain vague and very dim sense of gratitude in Barrie's heart toward Mrs. MacDonald for what she had just done. For Barrie did not want other ears to hear evil words spoken of her mother, and she was sure that they would be spoken.

Not until the stairs had ceased to creak under the departing feet did Grandma again open her lips. She had seemed to be thinking intently, as if making up her mind how to begin. Perhaps she was praying for guidance, Barrie told herself; but the morning and evening prayers in the dining-room with a few servants assembled were like harangues or didactic instructions to Heaven rather than supplications. Barrie thought that her grandmother had created a God for herself in her own image, and considered that she had a right, therefore, to tell Him what to do. Why should an all-good, all-wise God create a disagreeable, unkind person like Grandma? It didn't stand to reason. And Miss Hepburn was of opinion that God was indeed beneficent, in spite of those eternal fires in which she, almost equally with Grandma, fervently believed.

When there was no further sound of the housekeeper, Mrs. MacDonald began to speak, slowly and very deliberately.

"My son married against my will. His father was dead, and a woman's authority was not enough, for he was stub-

born, though a good son until *she* got hold of him with her witcheries and her false charms. He met her in London, and took her out of the theatre, where he had no business to go; and if he never had gone, all our troubles would have been saved. The woman was a play-actress — a light, frivolous creature with no more sense of moral responsibility than a butterfly."

"Butterflies are beautiful!" Barrie broke in. "God made them, I suppose, just as much as He made ants, and I'm sure He loves them heaps better." She thought of her grandmother as a big black ant, hoarding disagreeable crumbs in a gloomy hole.

Mrs. MacDonald went on as if she had not heard.

"The woman married my son because he had money, and when she had spent all she could lay her hands on — spent it on dresses and hats and every kind of sinful vanity — she left him and his home, left her baby a year old, to return to the theatre, I suppose. I thank God that I still had influence with Robert my son to keep him from running after her like a love-sick fool, and trying to bring her back to the decent home she had disgraced. But his heart was broken by her wicked folly. Two years they'd had together under this roof and the disappointments she had made the boy suffer undermined his health. Two years more he was spared to me, and then he was taken. Never once did your mother write to him or to me, not so much as to ask whether her husband and child were alive or dead. While Robert lived, her things remained in her room just as she had left them the night she stole away like a thief, carrying only a handbag. There was the furniture the poor bewitched man had bought because

he thought nothing in his mother's house was fit for his wonderful bride. There were her clothes — the very dress you have on, made on purpose to show off her brazen looks in a portrait she induced my son to order from a painting man. There was everything, except her jewels, which she was careful to take — jewels more fit for an empress of a heathen nation than a self-respecting Englishwoman: and that is where the root of the mischief lay. She wasn't English. I warned my son in the beginning when he wrote of his infatuation. I said, 'It is bad enough that she should be a play-actress; but the daughter of an *Irish father* and an *American mother*, that is *fatal!*' He would not listen, and he was punished for his obstinacy. You were no comfort to him, for, as I pointed out many a time, you were bound to grow up the living image of the woman who had betrayed us. I told him if he lived he'd have it all to go over again in you — maybe worse, if that could be possible, for the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children even to the third and fourth ——"

"But I thought it was my mother I was like," Barrie flung at her.

"Figuratively speaking, it is the same thing, as you well understand, unless you are a fool. Your father was not strong enough to bear the burden which his own mistakes had bound on his shoulders. He left the responsibility of bringing up that woman's daughter to me, and under Heaven I have done my best. I have kept you away from vanities, hoping that in spite of all you might remain unspotted from the world. But blood will tell. To-day I find that, as your mother before you stole like a thief out

of the house, so you have stolen into this place, which was forbidden you, to gratify your curiosity and your vanity. I find you as bold as brass parading in that low-necked red dress, which I told your mother was a shame to any woman when I saw her flaunting in it. Now you know what she was, and what you are and are like to be. I tell you again, take off that gown as you would tear off a poisoned toad from your flesh; then go down to your own room and spend the rest of the day in prayer and meditation."

It was a triumph for Grandma that Barrie did not throw at her an insolent answer. For a moment the girl did not reply at all. Then she said, in a singularly quiet way, that she would take off the dress and put it back in the trunk, but not unless her grandmother would leave her alone to do it. Afterward, she would ask nothing better than to go to her own room and stay there. "I *want* to think," she added; "I have a lot to think about. But I shall think only good things of my mother. What you have told me has made me very, very happy. I believed that my mother was dead. Now I know she's in the same world with me, I could almost die of joy."

"It is like her daughter to feel that," Mrs. MacDonald returned bitterly. "If you are not downstairs in ten minutes, I will have the door locked and keep you in the garret without food or drink or light for twenty-four hours."

"I should *love* that!" exclaimed Barrie suddenly, in the manner of her old self. Nevertheless, she descended and advertised her return to the prosaic world by closing

the door loudly in less than ten minutes after Mrs. MacDonald had gone.

She walked straight into her own room and bolted herself in. If Grandma had seen her then, she could not have helped admitting that there was as much of Robert MacDonald in the lines of the girl's face as of the guileful Barbara Ballantree.

## II

NO NOTICE was taken of Barrie until half-past eight o'clock that night—half-past eight being considered night in Mrs. MacDonald's household. At that time, just as the hour was announced by an old friend, the grandfather clock on the landing, who had seen the girl go into the garret, Miss Janet Hepburn knocked at Barrie's door.

"Barribel," she called, as always pronouncing the fanciful name with a certain reluctance, partly on principle, partly because it was known to have been chosen by "that woman." "Barribel, by your grandmother's permission, I've brought you some supper. Open your door and take in the tray."

A voice answered from behind the panel, "I'll open the door if you will bring in the tray yourself."

Miss Hepburn hesitated for a moment. In the dim gaslight of the corridor her sharp profile looked eager as the face of a hungry bird. She thought quickly. Mrs. MacDonald had not yet finished her own supper. No such frivolity as evening dinner was known at Hillard House. Soup after dark except for an invalid would have been considered a pitfall; but the old lady liked to linger alone over the last meal of the day, reading a religious volume by the light of a lamp placed on the table at the left of her plate. When Miss Hepburn and Barrie finished

they always, as a matter of form, asked to be excused, though they both knew, and Mrs. MacDonald knew that they knew, how more than willing she was to be left alone with her book. At a quarter past nine the servants were called, they having already supped on bread and cheese. A chapter, preferably from the Old Testament, was read, a prayer offered up, and at nine-thirty precisely the family was ready to go to bed. Miss Hepburn had reason to believe that for three quarters of an hour she was free to do as she wished, and she wished as ardently as she was able to wish anything, to see Barrie. She had heard next to nothing of the day's events from Mrs. MacDonald, whose companion she was supposed to be now that the girl no longer needed her whole morning's services as governess. And from Mrs. Muir, into whose room she had slipped at tea-time, very little had been dragged out. Yet it was certain that something tremendous had happened. If she wanted to know what, her one hope lay with Barrie.

"Very well," she said, with the proper mingling of kindness and dignity, "I will bring in the tray."

The door immediately opened, and closed again after the flat figure of Miss Hepburn. Barrie thought that if the good Janet had been born a fish she would have been a skate, or at roundest a sole. Even her profile was flat, as if the two sides of her face had been pressed firmly together by a strong pair of hands. She wore her hair very flat on her head, which was flat behind; and just at the nape of the neck was a flat drab-tinted knot, of almost the same grayish-yellowish brown as her complexion. On her flat breast was a flat brooch with a braid of pale hair

as a background. Even her voice sounded flat in its effort at meekness and self-repression, calculated to appease Mrs. MacDonald in trying circumstances. Miss Hepburn looked about forty-five; but she had always looked forty-five for the last twelve years, and Barrie could hardly have believed that she had ever been younger.

"Your grandmother thinks that you have now been sufficiently punished," she announced, "and you are to come down as usual to prayers."

"Oh, am I?" echoed Barrie. "We'll see about that. As for punishment, if it pleases Grandma to think she's punished me, she may. I don't care. She couldn't have made me come out of my room to-day if she tried. But I don't bear *you* any grudge, Heppie. I'm very glad to see you. I want you to tell me things."

"What things?" inquired Miss Hepburn. "I didn't come to talk. I am here simply to see you begin your supper. You must be — er — very hungry."

"I've had plenty of food all day," said Barrie — "food for thought." She cleared a place on the one table by pushing a few school-books out of the way. She had been sitting in the twilight, for she was not allowed to have matches. Their possession might have tempted her to burn gas after ten o'clock, when at latest all lights had to be out. Now, Janet Hepburn brought a box of matches on the tray; and the gas, when lit, showed the sparsely furnished room with its gray-painted, pictureless wall, against which Barrie's red hair glowed like a flame. Outside the open window the old ivy and the young peeping roses, which had been green and pink and gold in the

twilight, lost their colour as the gas flared up, and evening out of doors darkened into night.

"I've brought you bread and cheese with a slice of cold beef," announced Miss Hepburn, "and Mrs. Muir has baked you a potato, but I am not sure whether your grandmother would approve of that. She distinctly said a cold supper."

"Will you please thank Mrs. Muir for me?" Barrie asked.

"You can thank her to-morrow."

"I mayn't have a chance. Do thank her for me to-night. Say I wanted you to."

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Oh — just *because*. Will you?"

"Yes, I will try, after prayers, when she is shutting up the house. Now, eat your supper."

"I don't want to, yet. Please, Heppie, dear Heppie, tell me what you know about my mother. You weren't here when she was, but you're a kind of cousin of Grandma's, and you must have heard all about her."

"If I had, that would not give me the right to tell you," replied Miss Hepburn, clinging desperately to her stiff dignity, despite the pleading voice and the "dear, dear Heppie," against which, being one third human, she was not quite proof. It was always difficult not to be beguiled by Barrie.

"I've only you I *can* come to," said the girl. "You're the one person in the house except me who isn't old and dried-up."

This was a stroke of genius, but the genius of instinct, for Barrie had no experience in the art of cajolery. "Was I named after my mother?"

"Only partly. She was a Miss Ballantree, and her first name was Barbara, I believe; but she disliked it, and when her husband wished to have the child christened the same, she insisted on Barribel. It seems that is an old Scottish name also, or Celtic perhaps, for she was Irish, though I know nothing of her family. But Barribel has always sounded frivolous to me."

"Yet you would never call me Barrie when I begged you to. I wonder if there ever was another girl who had to make up her own pet name, and then had nobody who would use it except herself? When I talk to myself I always say 'Barrie,' in different tones of voice, to hear how it sounds. I try to say it as if I loved myself, because no one else loves me — unless maybe you do; just a tiny, tiny bit. Do you, Heppie?"

"Of course I have an affection for you," Miss Hepburn returned decorously, half alarmed at so pronounced a betrayal of her inner emotions, "and naturally your grandmother ——"

"Let's not talk about her now," Barrie pleaded. "Was my mother young when she was married?"

"Quite young, I understand — about nineteen."

"Only nineteen — not very much older than I am. And she stood two years of Grandma and this house!"

"Barribel, you forget yourself."

"If I do, it's because I'm thinking about my mother. Twenty — twenty-one; that's what she was when she — went away!"

"She must have been. Of course, it is not my place to ——"

"No, dear Heppie, I know it isn't, so don't, please.

Could even you blame her for wanting to run away from this awful house, and she an Irish girl?"

"She was half American, I have heard."

"Perhaps, for all I know about Americans, that made it even harder for her to stand Grandma — and everything else. Anyhow, *I* don't blame her — not one bit."

"What! not for deserting her loving husband and her helpless child?"

"All day I've been wondering if father knew how to show his love for her. He didn't to me. I can remember that. I used to be afraid of him and glad to escape. Perhaps he made *her* feel like that too — oh, without meaning it. I'm sure he was good. But so is Grandma good — horribly good. There's something about this house that spoils goodness, and turns it to a kind of poison. It must have been awfully depressing to be married to father if one had any *fun* in one, and loved to laugh. As for the 'helpless child,' I dare say I was a horrid little squalling brat with scarlet hair and a crimson face and a vile temper, that no one could possibly love."

"It is a mother's duty to love her child, in spite of its appearance; and if it has a bad temper, all the more should she endeavour by prayer and example to eradicate its faults in bringing it up. At least, so I have always been taught. Personally, of course," Heppie hastened to add, "I know nothing of motherhood and its duties."

"Then you never played dolls," said Barrie gravely. "I never had but one doll — the porcelain-headed darling father gave me. Grandma let me keep it because it came from him, and I did love it dearly! I do still. I learned

just how to be a mother, playing with it. I know I shall be a perfectly sweet mother when I have a child."

"Barribel, you should not say such things. It is most unmaidenly."

"I don't see why," Barrie argued. "Perhaps my mother's people wouldn't let her say such things when she was a young girl, and then she began to be an actress, and was so busy she never had time to learn much about children and duty and that sort of thing. But I won't be unmaidenly any more, dear Heppie — at least, if I can help it — if you'll only do me one great favour."

"What is it?" Miss Hepburn inquired cautiously.

"Tell me what's become of my mother. Oh, you needn't be afraid! Grandma let it out that she's alive. She's not even old yet — not so *very* old. You must tell me what's happened to her."

"Nothing creditable, I fear," replied Janet, finding a certain sad pleasure in the sins of another, so different from her own good self. "She has, I believe, continued to act on the stage."

"I'm sure she must be the greatest success!" exclaimed Barrie.

"As to that, I have no means of knowing. I always skip news of the theatre in reading the papers aloud to Mrs. MacDonald."

"Oh, just to *think* that any day I might have seen things about my mother in the newspapers, and perhaps even her pictures! I wish I'd known! I'd have got at the papers somehow before they were cremated. Now I understand why Grandma tries to keep them out of my hands."

"There were many reasons for that," said Miss Hep-

burn, loyal to her employer's convictions and her own pallid copies of those convictions. "No really *nice* girl ever reads the newspapers, or would wish to do so. They are full of wickedness. There is much I have to miss out."

"Do you think my mother has kept her married name for the stage?" Barrie wanted to know.

"That," answered Miss Hepburn almost eagerly, "has been poor Mrs. MacDonald's greatest trial — except your father's death. To think that the name of her son — the name of his great ancestors — should be bandied about in the theatres!"

"Then she does call herself MacDonald!"

"I fear that is the case. But now it will be useless asking me any more questions, for I shall not answer them. Will you let me see you begin your supper?"

"No, dear Heppie, for I'm not hungry; and I want to think. Thank you so much for talking to me, and being so kind. I believe you'd often like to be kind when you daren't."

Miss Hepburn looked slightly surprised. She had expected to be teased for further information, rather than thanked cordially for that already doled out. "I try to do my duty both to your grandmother and you," she returned. "I really must go now, and I shall not have to lock your door again, as Mrs. MacDonald considers the punishment over. You must be careful to come down the minute you hear the bell, and not be late for prayers."

"Good-bye, if you must go," said Barrie, following the small, stiff figure to the door. "I — I wish you'd kiss me, Heppie."

Janet actually started, and a blush produced itself in a way peculiar to her face, appearing mostly upon the nose, where it lingered rosily at the end. Kisses were not exchanged under Mrs. MacDonald's roof. Barrie's was a most disquieting suggestion, and sounded as if she had a presentiment that she was about to die or, at the best, be very ill. Still, there was no real impropriety in an ex-governess kissing her late pupil; and possibly the desire revealed a spirit of repentance and meekness on the part of Barribel, which deserved to be encouraged. Without spoken questions, therefore, Miss Hepburn pecked with her unkissed virgin lips the firm pink satin of Barrie's cheek. The deed seemed curiously epoch-making, and stirred her oddly. She was ashamed of the feeling she had, rather like a bird waking up from sleep and flutterings its wings in her breast. Her nose burned; and she hastened her departure lest Barribel should notice some undignified difference in manner or expression.

"I shall see you again downstairs in a few minutes," she said hurriedly.

Barrie did not answer, and Miss Hepburn softly shut the door.

Instantly the girl began making a sandwich of the bread and cheese, which she wrapped up in a clean handkerchief. She would not take the napkin, because that belonged to Grandma. Hanging up in the wardrobe was a long cloak of the MacDonald hunting tartan, which looked as if it had been fashioned out of a man's plaid. On each side was a pocket; and into one of these Barrie slipped her little package. Already made up and lying on the floor of the wardrobe was another parcel, very much bigger.

rolled in dark green baize which might have been a small table cover. From a shelf Barrie snatched a tam-o'-shanter, also a dark green in colour. Absent-mindedly she pulled it over her head, and the green brightened the copper red of her hair. Slipping her arms into the sleeves of the queer cloak, she caught up her bundle, turned down the gas, and peeped cautiously out into the corridor. No one was there. The house was very still. Grandma's bell for reading and prayer would not ring yet for twenty minutes or more. The girl tiptoed out, locked the door behind her, and slipped the key into the pocket with the sandwiches. If any one came to call her to prayers, it would appear that she had shut herself in and was refusing to answer.

## III

"CAR-L-I-S-L-E!" The Caruso voice of a gifted railway porter intoned the word in two swelling syllables, so alluring in their suggestion to passengers that it was strange the whole train did not empty itself upon the platform. So far from this being the case, however, not more than six men and half as many women, one with two sleepy, whimpering children, obeyed the siren call.

Five of the men looked for porters, and eventually culled them, like stiff-stemmed wayside plants; but the sixth man had not set his foot on the platform before he was accosted by two would-be helpers.

What there was about him so different from, and so superior to, his fellow-travellers that it was visible to the naked eye at night, in a not too brilliantly lighted railway station, could be explained only by experts in the art of deciding at a glance where the best financial results are to be obtained.

The man was not richly dressed, was not decked out with watch-chains and scarf-pins and rings, nor had he a shape to hint that the possession of millions had led to self-indulgence. Many people would have passed him by with a glance, thinking him exactly like other men of decent birth and life who knew how to wear their clothes; but railway porters and romantic women (are there other

women?) have a special instinct about men. The two female passengers unhampered by howling babies looked at him as they went by, and they would instinctively have known, though even they could not have explained, why the porters unhesitatingly selected this man as prey.

He was not very tall, and not very handsome, and he was not conspicuous in any way: but if he had been an actor, a deaf and blind audience would somehow have felt with a thrill that he had come upon the stage. The secret was not intricate: only something of which people talk a dozen times a day without knowing technically what they mean — personal magnetism. He was rather dark and rather thin, rather like a conquering soldier in his simple yet authoritative way of giving orders for what he wanted done. He had eyes which were of an almost startling blueness in his sunburned face: a peculiarity that made strangers look twice at him sometimes. If his features hardened into a certain cynical grimness when he thought about things that really mattered, his smile for things that didn't matter was singularly pleasant.

He did not smile at the porters as he pointed out that, besides his suit-case, he had only one small piece of luggage in the van, to be taken to his automobile; and there were other passengers who looked much jollier and more amenable than he: yet it was to him that a girl spoke as he was about to walk past her, after his chosen porter.

"Oh! Will you please be so very kind as to wait a minute!" she exclaimed.

Her "Oh!" was like a barrier suddenly thrown down in front of him. Of course he stopped; and if he were not greatly astonished it was only because so many odd things

had happened to him in life, in railway stations and drawing rooms and in all sorts of other places, that it took a great deal to make him feel surprise, and still more to make him show it.

He was roused to alertness, however, when he saw what manner of girl invited him to "wait a minute." He had never seen one like her before. And yet, of whose face did hers piquantly remind him? He had a dim impression that it was quite a celebrated face, and no wonder, if it were like this one. The only odd thing was that he could not remember whose the first face had been, for such features could never let themselves be wiped off memory's slate.

The girl was almost a child, apparently, for her hair hung in two long bright red braids over her extraordinary cloak; and her big eyes were child's eyes. What her figure was like, except that she was a tall, long-legged, upstanding young creature, no one could judge, not even an anatomist, because of that weird wrap. As a cloak it was a shocking production — a hideous, unbelievable contribution to cloakhood from the hands of a mantle-making vandal — but it caught the man's interest, because before his eyes danced the hunting tartan of the MacDonalds of Dhrum. Once that particular combination of green, blue, red, brown, purple, and white had flashed to his heart a signal of warm human love, daring and high romance; but he believed that long ago his heart had shut against such deceiving signals. Across the way in, he had printed in big letters "NO THOROUGHFARE," and was unconsciously well pleased with himself because he had done this, thinking it a proof of mature wisdom, keen insight

into his brother man — especially perhaps his sister woman — and a general tendency toward scientific, bomb-proof modernity, the triumph of intellect over emotion. And in truth his experiences had been of a kind to change the enthusiastic boy he once had been into the cynical, hard-headed man he was now. Nevertheless, as he looked at the girl in the tartan cloak, he heard within himself the war-cry of the clan MacDonald, "Fraoch Eilean!" and he smelt the heather of the purple isle of Dhrum.

It was many years since he had seen that strangely formed island-shape cut in amethyst against the gold of sunset sky and sea; but the purple and the gold were unforgettable, even for one who thought he had forgotten and lost the magic long ago.

She was a beautiful girl in spite of the ugly tam and the bag of a cloak. Her eyes had the deep light of clear streams that have never reflected other things than trees, shadowing banks of wild flowers, and skies arching above. There was something quaintly arresting about her, apart from the odd clothes.

The man stopped. His porter lumbered on sturdily; but that was just as well. The girl had asked him to wait: so he waited in silence to hear what she would say.

"Will you please look at a thing I want very much to sell?" she began. "Perhaps you'll like to buy it. Nobody else will — but," she added hastily, "I think you'll admire it."

He looked her steadily in the eyes for a few seconds, and she returned the look, in spite of herself rather than because she was determined to give him gaze for gaze.

"Why do you ask me to buy what you have to sell?" he

answered by a question. "Is it for charity or the cause of the Suffragettes?"

"Oh, no, it's not for charity!" the girl exclaimed. "And I don't know what you mean by Suffragettes."

The man laughed. "Where have you lived?" he questioned her.

She blushed for an ignorance which evidently struck strangers as fantastic. "Near Carlisle with my grandmother," she explained; "but she's never let me have friends, or make visits, or read the papers. I've just left her house now, and I want to go to London. I *must* go to London, but I haven't any money, and they won't trust me to pay them for my ticket when I get some. So I tried to sell a piece of jewellery I have, and nobody would buy it. I thought when I saw you come out of the train that maybe *you* would. I don't know why — but you're different. You look as if you'd know all about valuable things — and whether they're real; and as if you'd be — not stupid, or like these other people."

"Thank you," he returned, and smiled his pleasant smile. If another man had described such a meeting with a pretty and apparently ingenuous girl in a railway station at ten o'clock at night, he would still have smiled, but not the same smile. He would have been sure that the girl was a minx, and the man a fool. He recognized this unreasonableness in himself; nevertheless, he had no doubt that his own instinct about the girl was right. She was genuine of her sort, whatever her strange sort might be; and though he laughed at himself for the impulse, he could not help wanting to do something for her, in an elder-brother way. For an instant his thoughts went to the

woman who was waiting for and expecting him, the train being late. But quickly the curtain was drawn before her portrait in his mind.

"You say your grandmother never let you make friends," he said, "yet you seem to believe in your own knowledge of human nature."

"Because, what you aren't allowed to see or do, you think of a great deal more. Knowledge *jumps* into your head in such an interesting way," the girl answered, with an apologetic air, as a witness might if wishing to conciliate a cross-questioning counsel. "Here's the jewellery I want to sell. It was my father's, and belonged to his father and grandfather."

She opened her ungloved right hand to reveal a bonnet brooch of beautiful and very ancient workmanship showing the crest of the MacDonalds of Dhrum set with a fine cairngorm and some exquisite old paste. It must have come down through many fathers to many sons, for it was at least two hundred years old.

"You would sell this?" the man exclaimed.

"Well, I *must* get to London," she excused herself, "and it's the only thing I have worth selling. I *knew* you'd see it was good. The others would hardly look at it, except one quite horrid man who squeezed my hand when I was showing him the brooch, and that made me behave so rudely to him he went away at once."

"Was your father a MacDonald of Dhrum?" asked the man who had not squeezed her hand, and exhibited no wish to do so, though his eyes never left her face.

"Yes. Why, do you know our tartan and crest?"

"I — thought I recognized them." For an instant he

was tempted to add an item of information concerning himself, but he beat down the impulse. "If you want money, you can raise something on this without selling it," he went on. "It would be a pity to part with an heirloom."

"I didn't know I could do that," said the girl. "Of course it would be better. I'm going to London to find somebody — my mother," she continued, in a different tone. "When I get to her, she'll give me money, of course, and I can pay you back, if you'll lend me enough now to buy my ticket — and perhaps a little, a very little, more, because I mayn't find her at once. I may have to go on somewhere else after London, though I hope not. *Will* you lend me some money and keep the brooch till I pay?"

"I might be prepared to do that," said the man slowly. "But you surely don't mean to start off for London alone, in the night."

"Why not?" she argued. "There's no danger in railway trains, is there? I've never been in one yet, but I've read lots about them in books, and I think I shall love travelling."

"You've never been in a train!"

"No, because I was born at Grandma's house, and she never travels anywhere, and I've always lived with her. If my father hadn't died, and my mother hadn't — hadn't been obliged to go away when I was a baby, probably I should have been just like other girls. But now I suppose I must be very different, and seem stupid and queer. Every one stared as if I were a wild animal when I was asking my way to the railway station. But you will lend

me the money, won't you, if you think the brooch is worth it, because one of the porters told me there'd be a train for London soon?"

"When people are making up their minds to lend money to strangers, they always put a number of questions first," answered the man gravely, "so I must ask you to excuse me if I catechize you a little before I engage myself to do anything. Do you expect any one to meet you in London, Miss MacDonald?"

"Dear me, no!" and she could not help laughing to hear herself called "Miss MacDonald," a dignity never bestowed on her before. "I don't know any one in London — unless my mother's there."

"Oh, indeed! But London's quite a big place, bigger a good deal than Carlisle, you know, so you may have some difficulty in finding your mother if you aren't sure of the address."

"She hasn't an address—I mean, I don't know it. But she's an actress on the stage. I think she must be so beautiful and splendid that almost every one will have heard of her, so all I will have to say is, 'Please tell me whether Mrs. MacDonald the actress is in London?'"

"Not Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald!" This time he did look surprised.

"Ballantree was her name before she was married," the girl admitted. "And her Christian name's Barbara. Do you know her?"

"I do, slightly," replied the man. "But I had no idea that she ——" He broke off abruptly, looking more closely than ever at the vivid face under the knitted tam.

"I suppose, if you don't know her very well, she never spoke to you about having a daughter?" Barrie asked.

"No, she never spoke of it. But look here, Miss MacDonald, as I happen to be an acquaintance — I daren't call myself a friend — of your mother's, you'd better let me advise you a little, without thinking that I'm taking a liberty. From what you say, I have the idea that you've not had time to write Mrs. Bal — I mean, Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald that you're coming to pay her a visit.

"No, I only made up my mind to-day," said Barrie carefully. "Grandma and she aren't good friends, so my mother and I — don't write to each other. Grandma doesn't like the stage, and as you know mother, I don't mind telling you she's been perfectly horrid — Grandma, I mean. She let me believe that mother was dead — just because she's an actress, which I think must be splendid. That's why I'm running away, and wild horses couldn't drag me back."

"I see. Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald will be taken by surprise when you turn up.

"Yes. It will be like things I've dreamed about and invented to make into story-books — really interesting story-books such as Grandma wouldn't let me read, for she approves only of Hannah More. Won't mother be delighted?"

"Just at first her surprise may overcome her natural joy," said the man. "And here is where my advice comes in. It's this: Let the news be broken to your mother before you try to see her. That would be the wisest thing. Besides, she mayn't be in London now — probably isn't.

It's past the season there; and Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald is one of those beautiful and successful people, you know, who are generally found at places in the most fashionable time of the year. If she's acting, it will be easy to find out where she is from one of the stage papers. She could be written to, and ——"

"No, I *want* to surprise her!" Barrie persisted. "I want first to see her, for I know she must be a darling and perfectly lovely; and then I want to say, 'Mother, here's your daughter Barribel, that you named yourself, come to love you and live with you always.'"

"Er — yes. It sounds charming," replied the man, gazing at a large advertisement of a new food with quite an odd look in his eyes. "If your heart's set on that scene I've no right to try and dissuade you; but anyhow, the thing to do is to find out where she is before you start, for you might get to London only to have to turn round and come back. In August she's more likely to be in Scotland than in London."

"Oh, is she?" Barrie's face told all her doubt and disappointment. "But I can't wait. I must go somewhere. If I don't take a train, Mrs. Muir our housekeeper and perhaps Miss Hepburn may come here looking for me from Hillard House. I'm afraid they found out at prayer-time that I'd gone, and when they've searched all over the house and garden, they ——"

"So you make no bones about running away from home, Miss MacDonald?'

"Neither would you in my place if you and your mother were insulted."

"Perhaps not," the man admitted. "I did something

more or less of the sort when I was a year or two older than you — about seventeen ——"

"But I'm over seventeen already," Barrie hastened to boast "I'm eighteen."

The man smiled at her, his nicest smile. "Eighteen! That's very old, and it's only living the retired life you have that's kept you young. Still, there it is! You *have* lived a retired life, and it's — er — it's left its mark on you. It will take at least some months to efface it, even under your mother's wing. That means you're a bit handicapped among a lot of people who haven't lived retired lives. I don't advise you to go back to your grandmother's house, because you wouldn't anyhow — and besides, you know your own business better than I do; only, of course, you'll have to write to her. As an acquaintance of your mother's, I'd like to put you with some kind people for to-night until we can find out for you just where Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald is. Don't you see that this would be a sensible arrangement, if the people were all right, instead of starting off on a wild-goose chase?"

"Ye-es, perhaps. And it's very kind of you to take an interest for my mother's sake," said Barrie, trying not to show her disappointment ungraciously.

"Of course, for your mother's sake," he repeated, with an expressionless expression. "I call myself Somerled," he added, watching her face as he made his announcement.

She caught him up quickly. "Why, that was the name of the great leader from the North who founded the Clan MacDonald!'

"You know about him, do you — in spite of the retired life?"

"Not to know would disgrace a MacDonald. And just because I *have* led a retired life I've had more time to learn than girls in the world. I know a good deal — really I do. I've read — heaps of things, behind Grandma's back. Somerled of the Isles is a hero of mine. I didn't know any one had a right to his name nowadays."

"I dare to bear it, like a Standard, with or without right, though unworthily. Somerled of the Isles was my hero too."

"Then you're Scottish, like me," said Barrie. "I don't feel related to Grandma's people, and I don't know anything about mother's. But if you're going to be my friend for her sake, I'm glad your name is Somerled. It's splendid!"

"Yes, it's splendid to be called Somerled," the man agreed, faintly emphasizing the substituted word. "And I'm proud to be a Scot, though I've lived half my life in America, and they think of me there as an American. I've been thinking of myself that way too for seventeen years. But blood's a good deal thicker than water, and I was born on the island of Dhrum."

"Our island!" exclaimed Barrie. "That makes it seem as if we were related."

"I hoped it would, because a Somerled has a right to the trust of a MacDonald. Will you trust me to motor you to my friend Mrs. West, who's stopping just now with her brother in a nice little house just outside Carlisle? It's named Moorhill Farm, and belongs to a Mrs. Keeling, who has lent it to Mrs. West. I'm going there, and they'll

be glad to keep you until we can learn where you ought to meet your mother. Perhaps you know of Mrs. Keeling and her house?"

Barrie glanced at him half longingly, half doubtfully. She had been looking forward to the adventure of travelling to London; but if there were less chance of her mother being there than elsewhere, London was wiped off the map. Still Barrie was loth to abandon her plan. To do so was like admitting failure — in spite of the motor, which she would love to try. She had never been within two yards of a motor-car.

"I've seen Mrs. Keeling in church," she said. "She has stick-out teeth. Grandma bows to her. But how can you tell that Mrs. West will be glad to have me?"

"I'll answer for her hospitality," came Somerled's assurance. "You'll like Mrs. West. She's a widow, and a sweet woman. Her brother's as nice as she is — Basil Norman. Perhaps you've heard of them? They write books together — stories about travel and love and motor-cars."

"No," Barrie confessed. "I don't know any authors later than Dickens, unless I see their names in book-sellers' windows, when I come into town with Heppie — Miss Hepburn. If you don't mind, I think I'd rather not go to Mrs. West's. I'm afraid of strangers."

"Are you afraid of me, then?"

"No-o. But you're a man. I'm afraid of women. They stare at your clothes, and I know mine are horrid."

"Mrs. West won't stare. She'll help you buy pretty things to wear when you go to your mother."

"Will she? But how shall I buy them? I haven't any money."

"You'll have money from your father's brooch. Now — will you trust me and come to Mrs. Keeling's house, as your grandmother bows to her?"

"I'd rather go to a hotel, thank you."

"Nonsense. You can't go alone to a hotel."

"Why?"

"It wouldn't be proper for Miss MacDonald of Dhrum."

"Now you talk like Grandma!"

"I talk common sense. I'll lend you no money to spend in a hotel."

"Then take me to Mrs. West," the girl said, as she might have said, "Take me to the scaffold."

Somerled laughed with amusement and triumph. He was astonishingly interested in his adventure, astonishingly pleased at the prospect of continuing it. Surely this girl was unique! He believed in comparatively few things, but he believed in her: for not to do so would have been indeed ungrateful, as she was ready to prove her implicit belief in him.

"A daughter of Mrs. Bal!" he said to himself as he led Mrs. Bal's daughter to his motor-car.

Poor Barrie would have believed in almost any man who owned a motor.

## IV

ALINE WEST and her brother, Basil Norman, were walking slowly up and down the garden path in front of the old-fashioned manor farmhouse lent to them for ten days by an admiring friend. They were waiting for Somerled, who had expressed a desire not to be met at the station; and listening for the teuf-teuf of motors along the distant road prevented Mrs. West from attending to her brother's suggestions. He had had an inspiration for the new novel they were planning together, and was explaining it eagerly, for Basil was a born story-teller. Only, he had never found time for story-telling until lately. He was tremendously happy in his new way of life, although only a terrible illness which had closed others paths of success had opened this door for him. It did not matter in the least that Aline got the credit. Not only was he glad that she should have praise, but he was convinced that it ought to be hers. If she had not thought of asking him to try his hand at helping her four years ago, when the incentive to live seemed gone, he might have been driven to put himself out of the way. It was to her, therefore, that he owed everything; and though success as an author had never come to Aline until after the first book they wrote together, that, to Basil Norman's mind, was no more than a coincidence, and he had never ceased to feel that she

was generous in letting his name appear with hers on their title pages.

"I wonder if anything can have happened to him!" Aline murmured.

"Which, Dick or Claud?" her brother asked, puzzled. Dick was to be their hero, Claud the villain. Basil had been engaged in outlining the two characters for his sister's approval.

"No. Ian Somerled," she explained almost crossly, though her voice was sweet, because it was never otherwise than sweet. "Either the train's late or ——"

"I'd have met him with pleasure," Basil reminded her.

"It would be *fatal* to do anything he didn't wish," she answered. "He's a man who knows exactly what he wants, and hates to have people go against his directions in the smallest things."

Norman looked at her rather anxiously through the soft summer darkness that was hardly darkness. She was walking beside him with her hands clasped behind her back and her head bent. He thought her extremely pretty, and wondered if Somerled thought so too. But he wished that she did not care quite so much what Somerled thought. And he was not sure whether she were right about what Somerled liked.

"I wonder if we understand Somerled?" he asked, as if he were questioning himself aloud. "After all, we don't know him very well."

"I do," Aline said. "I know him like a book. He's bored to death with everything nearly. Only I — we — haven't bored him yet. And we must take care not to."

"You could never bore anybody," Basil assured her

loyally. "But — I wish you'd tell me something honestly, old girl."

"Not if you call me that!" She laughed a little. "It wouldn't matter if I were twenty-five instead of — never mind! I don't want people to think, when they hear you, 'Many a true word spoken in jest.'"

"Somerled's older than you are, anyhow," Basil consoled her.

"I should think so — ages! Don't forget, dear, I'm only just thirty. I don't look more, do I — truly?"

"Not a day over twenty-eight."

She was disappointed that he did not say less. She had been twenty-nine for years, and had just begun, for a change, to state frankly that she was thirty. She had never been able to forgive Basil for being younger than she, but she could trust him not to advertise his advantage. He really was a dear! She hated herself for being jealous of him sometimes. There were things he could do, there were thoughts that came to him as easily as homing birds, which were with her only a pretence: but she pretended eagerly, sincerely, even with prayer. She really yearned to be at heart all that she tried to make Somerled and other people believe her to be. And if she tried hard to be genuine all through, surely in time ——

"What I want you to tell me is," Basil was going on, "are you in l — how much do you really care about this man?"

"'This man?'" she repeated. "How serious that sounds; like 'Do you take this man for better, for worse?' Well, I confess that I *should*, if he asked me."

"Then you must be in love," her brother concluded.

"Because you don't need his money. We make as many thousands as we used to make hundreds; and it's all yours, really, or ought to be."

She was ashamed of not contradicting him, yet she did not contradict. She could not bear to put in words what in her heart she knew to be the truth: that their success was due to Basil, the dreamer of dreams; that her little smartnesses and pretty trivialities could never have carried them to the place where they now stood together. The worst part of her wanted Basil to think, wanted every one to think, that she was the important partner, that she was actually *all* in the partnership. And it was too miserably easy to produce this impression. Basil was so unassuming, thought so poorly of himself, realized so little how she leaned upon him in their work, admired her so loyally!

"Ian Somerled is more of a man than any other man I ever met," she said. "I like him for his strength and for his indifference. Everything about him appeals to me — even his money; for making it in the way he did was one expression of his power. Just because they say he'll never marry, I want ——"

"I can understand how a woman may feel about him," Basil said gently, when she suddenly broke off.

"I thought I was perfectly happy the day he asked us to tour Scotland with him in his car; and when he promised to spend a few days with us here, after he'd got through his business in London," Aline went on, "it was like *honey* to hear him say that he didn't want to come if any one else was to be here. He'd enjoy it only with you and me alone. But ever since I saw him I've been worrying until I'm quite wretched."

"Worrying about what?"

"Whether he *suspects* anything."

"Why, what is there to suspect?"

"Then *you* don't? I'm glad, for you're both men. If you don't suspect, why should he?"

"You'll have to tell me what you're driving at. I shan't have an easy minute till you do — and that means I can't write. You know I won't give you away."

"A woman wouldn't need telling. That's why I like men! You never guessed, then, that I've been doing it all? I was the power behind the throne. I made him invite us, and ——"

"The deuce you did! Why, I heard him ask you. It was on board ship, and ——"

"And before he asked, unless you were deaf, you heard me say I couldn't work up any enthusiasm about the next book we'd promised our publisher to write because we'd sold our last car and hadn't time to make up our minds about a new one, and we had no friends to give us good 'tips' about the country. It was then he asked me what country we wanted to write about, and I said Scotland."

"Well, yes, I suppose I heard you say all that, now you remind me of it. But it wasn't hinting, because you didn't know he was going to Scotland for his rest cure."

"Oh, yes, I did. I read it in the New York *Sun* before we sailed. And when I said we'd accept his invitation if he'd accept ours, Mrs. Keeling hadn't offered me this house."

"You said she had."

"I was sure she would, because she told me I had only to ask. She was dying to lend it. She wanted to be able

to tell everybody that Aline West and Basil Norman lived in her house for a fortnight in August. It's a great feather in her cap; and Ian Somerled coming to visit us here is something she'll *never* get over as long as she lives. I marconied her an hour after he'd said that he would come to us after London, and we'd begin our motor tour from Carlisle. 'Twas only taking Time by the forelock to tell him we *had* been invited. It *was* bad luck poor Mrs. Keeling being ill when she got my wire, and she really was a trump to turn out and go to a nursing home."

"Good heavens, is that what she did? I didn't know ——"

"Of course not. But you needn't mind so dreadfully. She's *much* more comfortable in the nursing home with the best attention than in her own. And, as a reward, we'll dedicate the book to her."

Aline said this as a queen might have suggested lending her crown to a loyal servitor. Basil laughed, rather uncomfortably, and his sister looked up hastily into his face, to see if he were making fun of her. Just then they were drawing near the open windows of the drawing-room, and the lamplight shone out so brightly through the old-fashioned embroidered lace curtains that she could see his profile. Hers too was clearly outlined as she lifted her chin anxiously.

The brother and sister were both good to look at, in ways so different that the two made a striking contrast. Aline knew that in appearance they were a romantic pair of travelling companions. Every one stared at them when they were together, for he was very tall and dark, more like an Italian or a Spaniard than an Englishman, and she

was gracefully slender and fair, dressing with a subtle appreciation of herself and all her points. Aline West's and Basil Norman's photographs, taken together or apart, for newspapers and magazines, were extremely effective, and were considered by publishers to help the sale of their books. Norman might have sat for Titian's Portrait of a Gentleman: and there were those who thought Mrs. West not unlike Lady Hamilton. Since the first expression of this opinion in print, she had changed the fashion of her hair, and at fancy-dress balls, of which she was fond, she generally appeared as the beautiful Emma. Certainly the cast of her features and the cutting of her lips faintly recalled those of Romney's ideal; but Mrs. West's pretty pale face had only two expressions: the one when she smiled — always the same delicate curving of the lips which lit no beam in the deep-set forget-me-not eyes; the one when she was grave and wistfully intellectual. She had a beautiful round white throat which she never hid with a high collar. Her hair was of that sun-in-a-mist gold that eventually fades almost imperceptibly into gray — if left to itself. But in Aline's case it was improbable that it would be left to itself. Every morning when dressing she examined it anxiously, even fearfully, to see whether it was becoming thinner or losing its misty glints of gold. Yet she knew that her fears were likely to advance the day she dreaded, and tried to shut them out of her mind.

"Why do you laugh?" she inquired almost irritably, for she was secretly afraid always of missing something that was seen by others to be amusing. She talked constantly of a sense of humour, pitying those not blessed

with it, but there were moments when she wondered bleakly if she had it herself. "Have I said anything funny?"

"Only you seem so sure that the dedication will be a panacea for every wound."

"So it will be for Mrs. Keeling."

"I thought you had the idea of dedicating it to Somerled, as he'll be taking us through Scotland in his car."

"I had. But I feel now it would be a mistake. He couldn't refuse, and one wouldn't be sure he was pleased. He's so horribly important, you know. I don't mean in his own eyes, but in the eyes of the world; so nothing we could do for him would really confer an honour. And the reason he's cynical and bored is because people have fussed over him so sickeningly, more and more every year, since he began to rise to what he is."

"Yet I don't think he's conceited."

"Not in the ordinary way. But he can't help knowing that he's some one in particular. He began to like us because we didn't fuss over him, or seem to go out of our way to please him. That's where I've been clever; for oh, Basil, I'd do anything short of disfiguring myself to win him."

"My poor girl!" Norman exclaimed.

She caught him up hastily. "Why do you call me 'poor?' Do you think I shan't succeed? Do you think he'll never care?"

"You're a far better judge than I am," her brother answered evasively. "Women feel such things. We—— "

"You feel things, too. You know you do, Basil."

"In an abstract way — not when they're just in front of my eyes."

"He has told me a lot about himself, anyhow." Aline took up a new line of argument, out of her own thoughts. "That's a good sign. He is so reserved with almost everybody — and he was even with me till our last evening on shipboard. I was telling him about Jim dying in India and leaving me alone there, almost a girl; and how there was no money; and how I took up writing and made a success. Then from that we drifted into talk about success in general; and he told me his whole story — much more than I'd ever heard from gossip, and a good deal of it quite different. I took it as the greatest compliment that he should open his heart to me — and a splendid sign."

"Yes, I suppose it was both," Norman agreed; and Aline had retired too far within the rose-bower of happy memories to catch a suggestion of doubt in his voice.

"I read once in a newspaper that he'd been a bootblack in Glasgow before he emigrated," Mrs. West said, as they turned away from the house again in their walk, and set their faces toward the distant gate. "It wasn't true. His father was a crofter on a little island somewhere near Skye. I think it's called Dhrum. I never heard of it before; and he had to excuse my ignorance, because I'm Canadian! It seems that a branch of the MacDonald family own the whole place and are great people there — lords of the isle. His name was MacDonald too, though his family were only peasants — clan connections, or whatever they call that sort of thing. I don't understand a bit, and I didn't like asking him to explain. It was too

delicate a subject, though he appeared to be rather proud of his origin. Scotch peasants are apparently quite different from other peasants. You'll have to study up the differences and make lots of notes for the book. I'm no good at anything with dialect, or character sort of parts. You wouldn't think now, though, that Ian Somerled had ever been a peasant would you? He talked a lot about his father and mother — evidently he adored them. He said they'd be miracles anywhere out of Scotland, but there were many like them there. According to him there was nothing they hadn't read or couldn't quote by the yard, from Burns and Scott back to Shakespeare. That was the way he was brought up, and instead of wanting him to go on crofting like themselves, they were enchanted because he drew pictures on their unpainted doors and their whitewashed walls. They saved all their pennies to have him educated as an artist, and encouraged him — quite different from peasant parents in books. One day the 'meenister' called, and saw the boy's pictures. He thought them something out of the ordinary — pictures of castles and cathedrals they were, with people going in and coming out, and portraits of friends, and historical characters. After that he took a great interest in Ian, and taught him Latin and the few other things his wonderful parents didn't happen to know. When Ian was about thirteen or fourteen, the 'meenister' tried to get help for the little MacDonald from the great MacDonald, a disagreeable, cranky old man with one daughter. They thought they owned the whole world instead of one tiny island, and the man wouldn't do anything for the child. He simply poured contempt on 'clan ties.'"

"That doesn't sound like the great folk of Scotland," said Basil, who for weeks had been reading little else but Scottish history, Scottish fiction, and Scottish poetry, in order to get himself in the right frame of mind for writing "the book." "I haven't come across a single instance of their being purse-proud or snobbish."

"These weren't purse-proud, because their purses had nothing in them to be proud of," Aline explained. "Their branch of the MacDonalds had lost its money and its love of Scotland. Old Duncan MacDonald was the uncle of the last lord of Dhrum, who had to go away from his island for good and let his castle to 'aliens' — English people. When the nephew died later, Duncan inherited, but never lived at Dhrum. He only came there once in a while to visit the tenants who'd hired the castle from him, if they happened to be people he knew, and would 'do' him well. He and his daughter were mostly in London, where they had a flat, and prided themselves on knowing no Gaelic. They took pains to show that they considered the crofter's son a common brat, and resented the 'meenister's' expecting them to do anything for his future, just because his name happened to be MacDonald, and he lived in a hut on a remote point of their island. Ian didn't lose courage, though; and soon after the great snub he contrived to work his way somehow to Edinburgh. He wouldn't take the money his father and mother had saved up for him, because they were old and had been ill, and needed it themselves. But he did all kinds of queer jobs, and at last walked into the studio of a celebrated artist, saying he wanted to pay for some lessons. At first the man only laughed, but when he saw Ian's drawings, he was

interested at once. He gave him lessons for nothing, and boasted of his protégé to other artists. It seems that a talent for both portraiture and architecture is very rare. When Ian was sixteen he won a big prize for the design of an important building which a lot of prominent architects had been trying for. Presently it came out that he was only a boy, a boy who could do wonderful portraits, too, and everybody began taking notice of him and writing enthusiastic praise in the papers. Some interviewer falsely reported that he'd called himself a cousin of the MacDonald of Dhrum, and disagreeable Duncan denied the relationship indignantly. He spoke to some one of Ian's father, who had just then died, as 'an ignorant old hay-cutter,' and the speech was repeated far and wide. You can imagine Ian Somerled forgetting an insult to his adored father! He dropped the name of MacDonald from that day, calling himself Somerled; and as he was all alone in the world — his mother was dead, too, and had never seen his success — he resolved to make a reputation in another country. Of course that was very *young* of him. He sees that now. He crossed to New York in the steerage, and vowed he'd never set foot in Scotland again, or take back his name of MacDonald, until old Duncann not only openly claimed him as a cousin, but begged him as a personal favour to return to Scotland."

"That must have seemed like sentencing himself to perpetual banishment," said Basil.

"I don't know. He appears to have had a kind of prophetic faith in his own powers of success. And he was right in every way. Duncan began to *grovel* years ago."

In talking of Somerled, Aline had forgotten to listen for sounds of his approach. She was interested in the story she was telling — more interested than she was usually in the development of her own plots. But luckily Basil saw to the plot-making nowadays, and she hadn't to worry. "It's funny," she went on, "that a man who laughs at romance should be one of the most romantic figures in the world. If you and I wrote up his story, and took him for the hero, all the critics would say 'how impossible!' But critics will never believe that anything highly romantic or sensational can happen really. I don't know *what* their own lives must be like — or what they can think of the incidents they must see every day in the newspapers! Somerled says the only romantic thing he ever did was to annex the name of Somerled: but almost every phase of his life would make a story. Take his success in America, for instance. He wasn't eighteen when he landed as an immigrant, with nothing in his pocket except what was left of the architectural prize. Most of that money had gone in giving his father a few last comforts, and putting up some wonderful, extravagant sort of monuments for both his parents, which Ian designed himself. But he hadn't been two months in New York when he won a still bigger prize, which came just as he was on the point of starving! A handful of oatmeal and an apple a day *I* should call starvation, but he says it was grand for his health. In six years, at twenty-four, he was not only the greatest portrait-painter in America, but one of the most successful architects, an extraordinary combination which has made him *unique* in modern times. And before he was twenty-eight came that big 'coup' of his, which he calls a

'mere accident that might have happened to any fool' — the buying of a site for a new town in Nevada, where he meant to build up a little city of beautiful houses, and finding a silver mine. Of course, it *wasn't* an 'accident.' It was the spirit of prophecy in him which has always carried him on to success — that, and his grit and daring and enterprise and general cleverness. Oh, Basil, if you could have heard him telling me these things that last night on the *Olympic* — leaning back in his deck-chair, smoking cigarette after cigarette (I was smoking too. I hate it; but I think he likes a woman to smoke and be a man's pal), the moonlight shining on his face, showing his eyes half shut, and talking in his quietest way, as if he were dreaming it all over again, or speaking to himself! I hardly breathed, till he broke off suddenly and laughed in quite a shy sort of way, ashamed of being 'egotistical,' though he hadn't praised himself at all. The flowery things I've said are mine. He even apologized! I felt I'd never had so great a compliment in my life. It seemed too good to be true that such a man should have opened his heart to me. But when his invitation for Scotland came, it — it set the seal of reality on the rest. Do you know, I can't help believing he made more than he need of his business in London; that the real truth was he wanted to stay there without us, and see how much he missed me. Now he's coming to accept *our* invitation, a day sooner than he meant to at first. Something tells me the reason why. I shall know for sure to-night, when I see him. He didn't want us to meet him at the station. But that was perhaps because — I couldn't have gone very well without you, and maybe ——"

"I see! I'm to make myself scarce and leave you alone in the garden!"

"Not yet, dear. Only when we hear the car actually stopping at the gate. There'll be plenty of time then. And if you don't mind ——"

"Of course, I don't mind," said Basil. He felt that he was blushing under the cover of darkness, and was thankful Aline could not see. Why the blush, he could not have explained. Was it for his sister, because the was managing her love affairs with a famous man in this energetic, businesslike way, and jumping eagerly at conclusions? Or was it for himself, because he was selfish and jealous of the new interest in Aline's life, which would — if it ended as she hoped — take her away from him and break their partnership?

He almost wished to accept the latter explanation. He would rather be disappointed in himself than think meanly — oh, ever so little meanly — of Aline.

Their partnership, begun when he was in the depths, regarding his life as practically finished, had given him the greatest happiness he had ever known. Memory flashed away at lightning speed over their travels together, their adventures. Somerled's wife would not write novels. And deep in his heart Basil knew that Aline's soul was not in the books, as his was. He would not acknowledge this difference between them, but he knew it was there. In old days, when Aline had written alone, she had always chosen some subject that loomed large in public interest at the moment, whether she herself cared about it or not, hoping to "come in on the wave." Just because she had not really cared her scheme of work had not given her

success. So it had been with the idea of their first book written together. Aline had wanted to plan out something to do with motoring, about which every one was keen just then. She had proposed to combine business with a cure for her brother; and when she had failed to think of a "good plot on the right lines," he had made a suggestion which flashed into his head. The joy of motoring, the wonder of travel, both new to Basil, had intoxicated him. He wrote as one inspired, for the sheer love of writing and telling what he had seen and felt. And the world, catching the thrill of his joy, had shared it.

He did not say this to himself now, did not realize the truth of it, and did not even believe that he could go on writing stories and succeeding without Aline. Only, he knew that he loved his work for itself, and she did not. That the light of his life would be gone without it, whereas she would be glad to stop working and be idle as the admired wife of a celebrity and a millionaire. In this he felt a vague injustice of fate which depressed him — a rare state of mind for Basil Norman, to whom for four years the world had been a happy and magically beautiful dwelling-place.

"I hear a car now!" he exclaimed.

"It's his!" she answered. "I heard the siren when his chauffeur sounded it going out of the garage. It's different from any others that pass along this road. Goodbye for a little while, dear. You're so kind to me! Wish me luck."

"I wish Somerled luck," he said, trying to laugh, as he turned and marched quickly off toward the house.

Aline quite understood. He meant that Somerled would be lucky to get her. That was nice of him, and like him, too, for Basil was as gallant and chivalrous to his sister as a lover. Yet — she was sorry that he hadn't wished her luck in so many words.

She walked toward the gate. The car had stopped.

## V

MRS. KEELING'S place, lent to her much-admired authors, had a very pretty gate. It was approached from the garden way, through an arbour thickly hung with roses and honeysuckle. It seemed to Aline West, as she went alone to meet Somerled, that night distilled a special perfume in the dew-filled cups of the flowers, sweet as unspoken love. She felt that she was on the threshold of happiness. It was the first step that counted. If she met Somerled in the right spirit, with the right word and the right look . . . in this perfumed star-dusk and stillness, when they had not seen each other for days . . . and he knew she had been waiting here for him, thinking of him, . . . and he saw that she had put on the dress he liked so much on shipboard, the one she had worn the last night, when he told her his life-story . . . might not the thing that she desired happen? She encouraged herself by saying, "Why not?" and reminding herself that she was an attractive woman. Lots of men had been in love with her — not the right ones, but that was a detail. Why not Ian Somerled? He was a man, after all, like others.

He was at the gate already . . . she almost ran.

"Hail, the conquering hero!" she cried to him, laughing.

He opened the gate. But it was not he who came in. He was opening it for some one else — a woman, a girl,

something tall and feminine, anyhow. It was wrapped in a cloak. It had a flat pancake on its head for a hat. What could it be, and mean? The idea darted into Aline's mind that there had been an accident on the way here from the station; that perhaps Somerled had nearly or quite run over this creature — or her dog — or something.

"Hello, Mrs. West!" he answered her cheerfully. "I've got to you at last, and I've brought a visitor for the night. I've given my guarantee that you'll make her welcome."

The light of Aline's joy went out like a ray of moonlight swallowed up by a marauding cloud. She did not in the least understand what had happened, or what were the obligations to which he had committed her; but in any case the lute she had tuned had a rift in it, a big, bad rift, and it could make no music to-night. She felt suddenly at her worst instead of her best, as if she had tumbled off a bank of flowers in her prettiest frock into a bog. She longed to be cold and snappy and disagreeable, as a wife may safely be to a husband when he has blundered, and as she had often been to Jim in his brief day; but Somerled was not her husband, and certainly never would be unless she minded her "p's and q's" like a good and very clever little angel with unmeltable butter in its smiling mouth. So she shrieked, "Hang it!" and even worse, with her whole heart, and said with her lips, in a charming voice, "Why, of *course!* I shall be delighted to welcome any friend of yours, and so will Basil. I *love* surprises."

It was a short arbour, and as they all three came out of it, Mrs. West and Somerled and the wrapped-up thing with the pancake hat — the chauffeur following with a suitcase

— Aline's eyes made the most of the starlight, that she might read the mystery and know the worst. The worst was very bad. Under the stars the girl looked a radiant beauty, and so young, so young! How was the man going to account for her? Was there still hope?

"I told you what Mrs. West would say!" exclaimed Somerled. "This is Miss MacDonald, a daughter of Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald."

"Oh!" said Aline. "How interesting! I'm delighted to meet her." She held out her hand, and the girl, who had not yet spoken a word, put hers into it.

There was no real reason why "I'm delighted to meet her" wasn't precisely the nicest thing to say in the circumstances, but somehow as a greeting it hadn't quite the right ring, Aline herself felt. And she was sorry, because she wanted to be entirely satisfactory to Somerled in every way, in all situations, no matter how trying, and thus perhaps save the ship. Why not? Many men of thirty-four were bored with girls, and Somerled must have been bored by them already in their thousands. Still, something that lay deep down within herself was sad and anxious. A daughter of the beautiful and almost notorious Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald! If he weren't in love with the girl, perhaps he had had a desperate love affair with the mother.

"I'd no idea that Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald had any children," Aline went on, as she shook a supple, satiny hand which wore no glove.

"She's only got me," said the girl, "and she doesn't know she's got me yet. At least, she may have forgotten."

Somerled broke out laughing. "You'll puzzle Mrs. West," he said, with a good-natured, amused, and proprietary air which stabbed Aline's feelings as with little sharp pins. No, whatever else he might be, he was not bored. "We'll have to do a lot of explaining by and by, indoors."

"Oh, yes," Barrie agreed. And then, plunging into her task, "He found me in the railway station. I've run away from home, and he wouldn't let me go to a hotel. Don't you really mind? Because ——"

"Of course I don't mind." Aline rose bravely to the occasion. "It sounds wildly romantic, like most things that contrive to happen to Mr. Somerled, although he says he's ceased to believe in romance. Have you known each other long?"

"Only to-night," replied Barrie. And Somerled began to see that, as he had said, there certainly would have to be a lot of explaining. It almost seemed complicated. Nevertheless, he felt that he had done the only thing possible, and so far from having regrets, he had a curious sense of elation that was boyish. He wanted to see what was going to happen next. He felt as if by some rather nice accident he had been inveigled into playing a new game.

"I've known Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald ever since her first famous tour through America some ten or twelve years ago," he said. "You'll be amused, Mrs. West, to hear in what a queer way I ran across her daughter to-night."

"Yes, indeed, no doubt," answered Aline, as they walked toward the house. She was forcing herself to

cheer up a little. His tone in speaking of the actress didn't sound like the tone of a man in love. And men of his type, who had been run after and spoilt, surely didn't fall in love at sight. It was going to prove no more than an annoying incident, this bringing home of a strange girl, who mightn't be so desperately pretty, anyhow, in a bright light. To-morrow the creature would be packed off to her mother or some one; and in a day or two more Somerled and Basil and she — Aline — would start off on their heavenly trip as if nothing had happened.

But Barrie was even prettier in the lamplight of the hall and drawing-room than she had been in the silver vagueness of starlight. Aline tried to think that she was the weirdest frump in the world, and absolutely impossible as a fascinator; but she knew that the weirdness would be superficial to the eye of Man. The thing was to hurry her away in all her frumpiness.

Aline brought them into the low-ceiled drawing-room which, with her own hands, she had made beautiful with many flowers in honour of Somerled's coming. She and Basil had been here for several days, while Somerled attended to business in London, and she had been looking forward to her friend's comments upon this drawing-room. She had imagined his exclaiming: "You've made it look like yourself!" But the girl had spoiled her effects. Somerled merely said, "What a pretty, old-fashioned room! The green wall is a becoming background." And when he uttered this comment it was at his vagabond he looked, not at his hostess.

Barrie was rather remarkable against that green. She glanced around, evidently in rapt admiration of everything

she saw. Her eyes were very bright and big, her young, red lips a little apart. "Silly thing, gaping with her mouth open!" Aline relieved her feelings by saying to herself.

"Oh, it's so beautiful here, and Mrs. West's dress is so lovely," the girl said; "it makes me feel I must take off this horrid cloak and tam, not to be a blot. May I take them off?" she asked Aline, turning frank admiration on her, as one turns on a searchlight.

Aline would have liked to think of some reason for saying "no," such as a draught, or an immediate departure for upstairs; but even if the excuse had been valid enough, it would have been of no use, for without awaiting permission, which she took as a matter of course, the weird creature had whipped off her green pancake and was throwing back her cloak. "Not that my dress isn't nearly as bad," she apologized, sighing. "I have never seen such a pretty room as this."

It was really nothing wonderful by way of a room: a little oak panelling; faded green brocade walls; some nice old pastels; furniture of the Stuart period; pretty bright chintz; a few old Chelsea figures on the mantel and in a cabinet; quantities of red and white roses in Chinese bowls. Aline ached to snap, "If you've never seen anything as pretty as *this*, where have you lived?" But that was not the way of Somerled's ideal woman. It would have been better if the stupid thing had praised Mrs. West's looks, thus riveting Somerled's eyes and appreciation; but all her silly admiration seemed to be for the dress and the room. Little brute! Incapable of calling another female pretty, when a man was present. Just

what one would expect of an actress's daughter, especially *that* actress, if half one heard of "Mrs. Bal" were true.

Aline was inclined to believe that Barrie MacDonald had purposely posed herself under a hanging lamp, so as to show off her hair when suddenly uncovered. The daughter of an actress, with the dramatic instinct in her blood! But the idea did not seem to occur to Somerled, experienced as he was, disillusioned as he thought himself. At least there was nothing cynical in the expression of his face.

"Do let me help you with your cloak," she said to Barrie, dimly hoping that the man would contrast her exquisitely corseted figure in its dress by Lucille with the crude, untrained outlines clothed in blue serge. She was not so tall as Barrie as they stood together, she discovered, and she wanted the girl to sit down. "You must both have something to eat," she went on, pulling the old-fashioned bead embroidered bell rope; and tears were close and hot behind her eyes, remembering how she had planned the little supper for herself and Somerled — and Basil, who hardly counted. "Or would you like to see your rooms first? One shall be made ready directly for Miss MacDonald. I suppose her luggage has come in with yours?"

"I have only a — a parcel," Barrie meekly confessed, feeling three times a worm, even a Laidly Worm. It was odd how this sweet-faced blond woman, with blue eyes and a halo of fair hair and a gentle smile, contrived — of course without meaning it — to make one feel the meanest, shabbiest thing cumbering a beautiful world! "I wonder if I'm going to like men better than women?" she thought.

"Ah, a parcel," repeated Aline daintily, as an incredibly neat maid answered the call of the beaded bell. "Moore," Mrs. West went on, "this young lady, Miss MacDonald, will spend the night. I think she might have the room of the red Chinese chintz at the end of my corridor. Please have it made ready as soon as possible, and ——"

"Oh, is your name Muir?" exclaimed Barrie delightedly. "That's the name of our housekeeper at Hillard House. Perhaps you're related, though I never *heard* of Mrs. Muir having any daughters or nieces."

The maid, deftly taking the cue from her mistress *pro tem.*, put into her impersonal gaze the coldness of a whole glacier as her eyes moved from defect to defect of Barrie's costume. The tone of that "Ah, a *parcel*," was unmistakable, and she knew exactly what Mrs. West thought of Miss MacDonald. "I am sorry, miss, but I do not think I am related to your housekeeper," she replied; and Aline determined to give her a blouse or half a dozen handkerchiefs. She really was a most intelligent person. So intelligent was she that she knew by the feeling in her bones exactly how much Mrs. West wanted to get Miss MacDonald out of the drawing-room and into the Chinese room, which would be the most unbecoming in the house to a red-haired person. "I can take the young lady up now, if you wish, madam," she continued, "for the room is in order — only to bring towels and hot water."

Barrie looked pleadingly at Somerled. "I am quite clean," she said. "I washed at home before I started. And I'm *so* hungry."

Her appeal to him as a tried and trusted friend waked up

something in Somerled which he had not known existed. Whatever it was stirred and was soft and warm in the region of his heart.

"I'm sure Mrs. West doesn't want to send you away," he said. And he could have said nothing more tactless. "I, too, am comparatively spotless," he went on, protecting his protégée by putting himself on her level, "and superlatively hungry. We shall both be delighted to accept your invitation to supper." He laughed, and Barrie gave him a grateful, understanding glance. He felt as if she were a wonderfully pretty doll which had somehow come alive after he had bought and rescued it from an upper shelf in an unworthy toy-shop — a dear, delightful, untamed doll which now belonged to him; and he was not sure that he wanted to let anybody else play with it until he had begun to tire a little of its tricks himself. Of course he'd tire in time; but there would not be time for tiring, because the doll must soon be packed off and sent to its mother.

"Tell Mr. Norman that Mr. Somerled has come, and that we're ready for supper," said Aline to Moore. The eyes of mistress and maid met, and for an instant they were social equals.

Basil Norman was a man who had odd thoughts and enjoyed them. For this reason he did not weary of his own society, for he never quite knew what he would think next. When he came to the door and pushed it open, he half believed that he was dreaming the tall, beautiful, badly dressed girl with torrents of red hair. People in real life did not wear their hair in torrents. Perhaps she was a ghost who went with the house, and he had never hap-

pened to see her before. He wondered if the others had noticed her yet.

"How are you, Somerled?" he inquired, not taking his eyes off the apparition. It was looking at him, too, almost anxiously, as if it were wondering whether he would be friend or foe; but, of course, it did not speak.

"All right. Very glad to see you both again — and to be here," Somerled answered.

"Miss MacDonald," announced Aline, thin-lipped.

"So you have a name?" said Basil to Barrie. "Was it given to you in dreamland or the spirit-world?" Then she knew at once that he was not a foe, but a friend.

"Fairyland," she replied, beaming on him. "I was in fairyland to-day. If I hadn't been there, I shouldn't be here." She could answer her own late question now, with practical certainty. She *was* going to like men better than women! Her mother, of course, would be an exception.

## VI

IT WAS a delicious little supper that Mrs. West had ordered in Somerled's honour, yet for some mysterious reason, thoroughly understood only by Aline, nobody did justice to it or enjoyed it much. Perhaps there was thunder in the air, which upset the nerves of every one, even the nerves of Moore, who spilt *bouillon* on Miss MacDonald's sleeve. This was the explanation which occurred to Basil; and certain it was that the sky had suddenly clouded over, hiding all the stars.

"I do hope we're not going to have rain for our trip," he remarked, more for the sake of something to say than because, even if rain came, it were likely to last. "It's just the ticklish time of the month for weather, you know: to-morrow we shall have the new moon."

"The heather moon!" Barrie said softly, looking out of the open window at the purple night, purple as heather.

"What do you mean by a heather moon?" asked Basil, interested. "It sounds sweeter than honeymoon."

"It's the sweetest moon of the year," the girl answered. "The moon when all the most beautiful things ought to happen to the people who are worthy of them — and the honeymoon can't come till afterward. I've always wanted something romantic to happen to me in the heather moon; yet nothing ever has, so far. It couldn't, at Grandma's!"

"But you haven't explained the heather moon," Basil reminded her.

"Don't you *really* know?" She opened her eyes very wide as she smiled at him in a friendly, childlike way; and Basil and Somerled forgot that there was a Mrs. West in the room. It was a momentary lapse of memory, but Aline felt it electrically. She was enraged at Basil, and disgusted with Barrie, though merely grieved with Somerled.

"*There's* a minx for you!" thought Moore, who was plain, and had been chosen by Mrs. Keeling because her teeth stuck out more than the lady's own.

"Wait! I believe, as a good Scotsman, I can guess," said Somerled. "The heather moon's the moon of August, the moon when the heather's in its prime of bloom."

"Yes!" cried Barrie, joyous that it should be he, her first friend, the friend of her mother, who had solved the puzzle. "That's it: and it's the moon for falling in love. That's why the honeymoon has to come afterward." Then, seeing that Mrs. West was looking at her with a look that might mean astonishment or disapproval, she blushed. It was queer, but for a minute that pretty, quite young woman — if widows could be called *quite* young — had an expression almost like Grandma's.

"Oh, I do hope I haven't said anything horrid?" Barrie appealed from one to another. "You see, I never dared say anything at all about love before Grandma or Heppie, but it is talked about so *much* in books, I thought I might mention it in company. I'm sorry if I've not been maidenly, which Miss Hepburn is always telling me I'm not."

"I suspect most maidens think a good deal about love whether or no they talk of it, don't they, Norman?" said Somerled.

"How should I know?" Basil asked.

Both men were different from their everyday selves to-night. They seemed self-conscious.

"Why, it's your business to know. You write novels. Or do you leave all the love parts to your sister?"

"I suppose widows may talk as much as they like about love," said Barrie reflectively, "having had it and passed it by."

The creature was pretending to take for granted that widows were poor, *passée* things who had lived their lives and could have no more personal interest in heather moons or honeymoons! Mrs. West grew pale, and was angry with herself for caring. Barrie made her feel faded — a "back number." She told herself that if she could not get rid of this girl the first thing to-morrow, she should be ill.

"You must ask your mother these questions, and she'll answer them better than I can," Aline said in her pretty voice, with her gentle smile.

Already she had heard from Barrie and from Somerled something of the girl's story, and knew that through family misunderstandings mother and daughter had been separated for years. "You must be *so* impatient to see her!" she went on.

"I am," said Barrie.

"I know Sir George Alexander a little," Aline answered. "He may take a curtain-raiser of ours; and it's occurred to me to telegraph him in the morning, as soon as the post-

office opens. He'll be able to let us know where Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald's acting. We won't trust to the stage papers alone. It would be a pity to keep this child in suspense a minute longer than necessary. Don't you think it's a good plan, Mr. Somerled?"

"Very," he agreed. It was a good plan. And it *would* be a pity to keep the child in suspense. The pretty doll must be packed up and sent away where it belonged, whereupon everything would go on as before. And the heather moon would begin to shine gold on purple, for the trip through bonny Scotland, which he had planned. He had been looking forward to the tour, not with keen enthusiasm indeed, but with interest. He had been satisfied with the companions he had chosen, and the fact that they wanted to see Scotland had given him an incentive for taking the rest cure he had been imperatively ordered, in his native land rather than elsewhere. Once, long ago, self-exiled at the age of Barrie MacDonald, he had passionately yearned for his "ain countree," and often regretted the boyish vow he was too proud and obstinate to break. But years had passed now since Duncan MacDonald and his daughter Margaret visited America to find themselves worth knowing only as kinsfolk of the despised peasant. Accepting the situation because of its advantages and his necessities, the old man had ignored the past and "made up" to the young millionaire artist. Ian's sense of humour had been so tickled that, to his own surprise, he had laughed and forgotten his youthful rancour. It struck him as distinctly funny that he had ever taken old Duncan's waspishness seriously enough to make vows of any sort because of it. And he saw that

indirectly he owed fortune to the haughty lord of Dhrum. It had amused Somerled a good deal and pleased him a little that "his highness" (as he called the great one) should implore the "peasant brat" to become tenant of Dunelin Castle for an unlimited term of years; that Duncan should chat to newspaper men of his "distinguished relative Ian MacDonald, who had won fame under the very suitable *nom de guerre* of Somerled"; and that "Cousin Ian" should be pressed to meet "Cousin Margaret." It was a queer world, and nobody in it was queerer than one's self. So Somerled had felt when, just because the miracle had happened to free him of his vow, he no longer pined to gaze upon his native Highlands. He felt at home and happy enough in America; and if being "happy enough" wasn't quite the beautiful state he had pictured as a boy, it was full of interest. He had taken Dunelin Castle off its owner's hands at a high yearly rent, in order that no rich and vulgar Cockney should become the tenant, but he had never stayed there, though once, even to have the right of entrance would have seemed a fairy dream. There were no such things as fairy dreams for him since he had thoroughly grown up, because in the process of becoming a millionaire he had ceased to believe in any kind of dreams. Friendships and sympathies he had vainly longed for in his poverty could be his for the asking or even without the asking now; and that was the reason he did not feel they were worth having. He had no use in his heart for little brothers and sisters of the rich, and in his experienced hardness he was sometimes unjust to kindly people. But he had liked the novels of Aline West and Basil Norman before he met the two popular Canadian authors on ship-

board; and learning that they planned to write a "Scotch book," it had occurred to him that they might all three go about sight-seeing together. His rest cure had ceased to bore him in prospect; he had thought with some pleasure of showing Aline Dunelin Castle and the island of Dhrum. Suddenly, however, Aline's own words damped the prospect as with a douche of cold water.

She was perfectly right, too. It would be a very good plan to place the waif he had picked up as soon as possible in the care of a mother, even such an extraordinary, incredible mother as Mrs. "Bal" MacDonald: a good plan for the girl's sake, and for everybody's sake, because it was arranged to start for Scotland the day after to-morrow. Still, Barrie's impromptu ode to the heather moon had for a moment irradiated his mind with a light such as had not shone for Somerled on land or sea since he had become rich enough to afford the most expensive lighting. Then as quickly it had died down. He saw himself spinning agreeably through Scottish scenes with Mrs. West and her brother, and suddenly, treacherously, he felt that to spin agreeably was not enough to satisfy him, that it was unworthy of wondrous golden light on purple hills of high romance. He wanted something more, something altogether different, and the plans which had contented him looked dull as ditchwater in the fading glamour. He himself looked dull. Aline looked dull, and for a moment he almost disliked her sweet blue eyes, her pretty, ever gentle smile, behind which must lurk some true feeling, or she could not write those delicately charming books.

"And don't you think, too," Aline urged kindly, "that we ought to put Miss MacDonald's poor grandmother out

of her misery? I might write a note to — Hillard House, I think she said? — explaining — er — what has happened, as well — as well as I could? Let me see, what *would* be best? Oh, I could say that by accident her granddaughter had met a guest of mine, a friend of Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald's; that she wasn't to worry, because, though her granddaughter refused to return, we would see that the child reached her mother safely, by to-morrow night if possible. I can mention Basil, and say we are the writers. If she has heard of us, that may relieve the poor lady's mind."

"Grandma hasn't heard of you, I'm sure," said Barrie, "unless you write religious books; but she won't *need* her mind relieved. While I was with her, I think she considered it her duty to take strict care of me; but now I've gone my own way, she'll see it was predestined. It was just the same with a Dresden china teapot she inherited. She didn't approve of it because it was too gay, but she always washed it herself because it was her father's. When it broke in spite of her, she wouldn't have it mended, and told Heppie to throw the pieces away."

"Nevertheless, I must write, and send the letter to Hillard House by hand," Aline insisted. "If I didn't do that I should not be able to sleep." She spoke with fervour, for she felt that she must have two strings to her bow. If "Mother" failed, she must be able to fall back on "Grandma."

## VII

BARRIE meant to be up and dressed before any one else in the house, but she lay awake until long after midnight, an unprecedented thing for her, and in consequence slept late, making up her accustomed nine hours.

Usually she fell asleep at ten or soon after, and jumped briskly out of bed at seven, waked only by her eager desire for renewed life, in a perfectly new day which no one else had ever seen yet. This morning it was a repeated knocking at the door which mingled with her dreams and shook her out of them. What door could it be? Where was she? the girl wondered for a dazed instant. Then Moore appeared with a breakfast-tray.

"Mrs. West said not to wake you for early tea," she explained with a glacial coldness worthy of Hillard House. "Madam and the two gentlemen are having breakfast out of doors in the summer-house; and when you get up, miss, I advise you to draw your curtains well across the windows or you may be seen."

Barrie wished that she too were having breakfast in the summer-house, and thought it mistaken kindness on the part of Mrs. West not to have her called. But, from Aline's point of view, there was no mistake. "I have let the child sleep," she explained to Somerled and Basil. "It *is* such a child, isn't it? And when she wakes up there

may be a wire in answer to mine, which went before eight."

When ten o'clock struck and still the telegram had not arrived, Aline asked herself if she oughtn't to go and call on old Mrs. MacDonald, who had deigned to take no notice of her tactfully expressed letter. Just then, however, Somerled's chauffeur was seen hovering in the flowery distance. He had brought two stage papers which his master had sent him out to buy. Aline was not pleased that Somerled had thought it necessary to get information on his own account. She would have preferred that he should trust to her; but she tried to think that perhaps he too was secretly tired of the girl and wanted to be rid of her. While he was glancing through the first paper, Moore glided into the summer-house with a brick-coloured envelope on a silver tray. It was addressed to Aline, and she opened it quickly, glad to be ahead of Ian with news. Then she found herself confronting an unexpected difficulty. "Mrs. B. M. trying new play small towns; will open Edinburgh in five or six days." With something like a gasp, Aline stopped on the brink of reading the telegram aloud. Who would have thought of this?

Her brain worked quickly. She didn't want Somerled to know that "Mrs. Bal" was so near. He might — make some ridiculous proposal about the girl — Heaven alone knew what! Men were capable of anything. The troublesome creature must really go back to her grandmother at once. Mrs. Bal could easily come to Carlisle and collect her — like lost luggage — if she cared to be burdened with such luggage. If only Aline could find some excuse

to make Somerled put down that paper and forthwith go into the house!

"Is your telegram from Sir George?" he inquired calmly, looking up from the paper which she longed to snatch.

For half a second she hesitated, and then said, "No. It's not what I expected." This was almost true.

Basil was gazing at her with solicitude. He thought that she had turned pale. "No bad news from any one, I hope, dear?" he asked.

"It is annoying," she replied with reserve, and crumpled up the telegram. "I was stupid to let Moore go — I must send an answer. Mr. Somerled, it would be too good of you to look for a form on the desk in the drawing-room."

"Shan't I ——" began Basil.

"I must ask your advice, meanwhile, about what I'm to say," she cut him short. Somerled put down the paper on the rustic seat, got up with alacrity, and started for the house. He would be back in three or four minutes, and not one of those minutes ought to be wasted. "Don't bother with questions," she said to Basil, "but if you love me, make those theatrical papers disappear before Mr. Somerled can read them. I'm going to change my mind and follow him into the house to write my telegram. I'll keep him a while talking. If he comes looking for his papers, I want them to be gone. I depend on you!"

Without waiting for Basil's promise, she darted away in order to intercept Somerled before he could finish his errand in the drawing-room. Of course, it would be easy for him to buy more papers, but before he could get them, Aline was hoping to have manœuvred the embarrassing Miss MacDonald out of the house. She counted that Ian

would be long in finding the forms, because men never could find the simplest things when told to look for them; but Somerled was an exception, and she only just caught him on the threshold. "After all, I want your advice instead of Basil's," she said. "Do sit here where we shall be quiet, and let me consult you." She patted the arm of a big chintz-covered sofa invitingly, and as she sat down Ian followed suit. Still she did not know what on earth to say to him. She hoped for an inspiration at the last instant, as Basil had taught her to do in arranging a difficult situation between hero and heroine. She wanted to play heroine now with Somerled as hero. Oh, how much she wanted it!

She took a long breath which *must* bring that inspiration at the end of it, if inspiration were to be of use. And it came at command, as things good or bad do come if intensely desired. But it was such a thoroughly objectionable inspiration that she hardly dared snap at it as she wished, for Aline was not malicious, and disliked malice and all uncharitableness as she disliked smearing her pink and white fingers with ink. Still, no alternative idea occurred to her, and Somerled was waiting. In desperation she had to take what offered, excusing herself to herself with every word she spoke. Yet through all she could not help thinking that she was clever, that she had marvellous presence of mind, and that she was displaying an inventive faculty which would have surprised Basil, though, of course, he must never know, because men were often as idiotically conscientious about little things as they were unscrupulous about big ones.

"The telegram that came was from Mrs. MacDonald,

the child's grandmother," she heard herself explaining, not forgetting, in her mental confusion, to rub in the impression of Barrie's unfledged youth. "I was surprised at not hearing, but this wire is an answer to my letter. The old lady goes into no particulars, but she says: 'Gravest reasons why my granddaughter should not join her mother. Hope you in person will bring her back to me.' Now, dear Mr. Somerled, the little girl is your protégée. It's for you to say what's to be done with her."

Somerled did not reply at once. He sat thinking, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, making a jingling noise with keys or silver, which in her present mood got upon Aline's nerves extraordinarily. She felt that if he did not stop jingling and begin to speak she should scream. If he asked to see the telegram, she was prepared to say that she had torn it up, as an excuse not to show it to Basil, on second thoughts the affair appearing to be Somerled's business. Somerled did not, however, make the request, and Aline was spared an extra fib, at which she was unreasonably pleased.

"Well?" she controlled herself to murmur, instead of screaming.

"I should feel a traitor to give the girl up," he said. "In fact, I can't do it unless she agrees. I promised not even to advise her that she ought to go back. She trusted me when I brought her here."

"Shall *I* have a little talk with her?" Aline suggested, and never had her voice been so kind and sweet. Indeed, in her trembling hope, she was willing to be sweet and kind — with limitations.

Somerled thought again for a minute, jingling more

horribly than ever. Then, just at screaming-point once more for Aline, he said decidedly, "No, thank you. From what Miss MacDonald's told us, it's natural her grandmother should think there are grave objections to Mrs. Bal as a guardian; but the old lady's two generations at least behind the age. Youth's at the prow nowadays, and — a mother's a mother, anyhow. We'll have to give Mrs. Bal a chance to do the maternal act ——"

"She may be far, far away, even in America — or Australia," Aline objected. "And even if ——"

"Oh, Mr. Somerled, mother's coming to Edinburgh!" cried a voice at the long window, and Barrie appeared, waving a newspaper.

The one unforeseen thing had happened. The vagabond had strayed into the summer-house and beguiled Basil. Aline knew too well what excuse he would make if accused: "Why, you didn't tell me *she* wasn't to look at the papers!"

"I've seen the name, 'Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald,'" the detestable girl went on, pushing into the room without asking permission. "She's going to 'open,' as the paper expresses it, in a new play called 'The Nelly Affair,' on Monday night at the Lyceum Theatre. Next Monday! Nearly a week from now! How can I wait — what shall I do till then?"

It was to Somerled that she appealed. She made him feel that the responsibility was his. And it was a bad moment to feel this, because of Mrs. West's telegram from Grandma. He got up from the sofa, still jingling the money in his pockets. Looking down at Aline he saw only her profile and an ear as deeply pink as coral under

a loop of blond hair. Evidently she too was feeling the situation. Good of her to take an interest! She really was good. She had asked his advice. Now he would ask hers.

"Mrs. West and I will talk over a plan I have for you," he said to the girl.

"Is it your plan — or hers?" asked Barrie anxiously.

"It will be both by the time you hear it," he answered, with a reassuring smile.

Aline humoured him. "Run away and play, little girl, till the plan is cooked," she gayly cried. "Play with my brother."

Barrie backed out, feeling as if she had been half smothered with a perfumed pillow.

"Do you guess my plan?" asked Ian.

"I wonder?" Aline murmured. She could not have spoken aloud just then.

"It's this. Why shouldn't we take her with us in the car to Edinburgh? We've lots of room."

She had known that this would come. All she had done had only hastened the catastrophe. "That poor old lady," she stammered. "I can't help sympathizing — being a little sorry for her. Isn't she, then, to be considered— after bringing up the girl?"

"You think," he said reflectively, "that she ought to be consulted?"

"Oh, I do!"

"Very well. Then I'll go and have it out with her myself."

"The telegram!" thought Mrs. West, her ears more coraline than ever. "After all," she faltered, "perhaps it

would bring about complications. She might resort to — to something legal. Fancy if she sent the police to get back her granddaughter."

Somerled laughed and said nothing. He was not in a mood for argument.

"He won't go," Aline thought. "Thank Heaven, he hates bother."

This was true of Somerled as a rule; but his rules had exceptions.

## VIII

SO this was the garden where that strange flower of girlhood had budded and blossomed. All at once Barrie, in her quaintness, became a readable riddle to Somerled.

The two gates in the high wall were kept bolted, but there was a jangling bell for each, the gate for visitors (it was almost supererogatory), and the gate for tradesmen and servants. An elderly and sullenly astonished woman opened the visitors' gate for Somerled, and made of her lean form a barrier lest he should try to pass. But she being narrowly built, on somewhat Gothic lines, and the gateway being broad, Somerled saw past the flying buttresses of her skirts into the background. And it was this background that explained in a flash why the girl knew less of life than a bird which has learned to use its wings; also the reason why she could never return to waste her young years behind the garden wall of Hillard House. The thought came into Somerled's mind that it would be interesting to show her the world she had never seen, not only between Carlisle and Edinburgh, but over the hills and far away, as far as the purple island of Dhrum, set in its sunset frame of ocean gold — or even farther. That could not be, of course, but the picture was pleasant.

He had prepared himself to be ingratiating; but he

realized that ingratiation was not a successful line to pursue with dragons. Instead of inquiring politely if Mrs. MacDonald were at home, he said bluntly, "I wish to see Mrs. MacDonald; I have business with her — not my business, but hers. And you may tell her I am not The MacDonald of Dhrum, but *a* MacDonald from Dhrum, a very different thing."

He knew well that the name of Somerled would be no "Open Sesame" to this door, and he rather enjoyed the knowledge. It was clear at once that he had used the right key. Perhaps no other would have served a stranger. Anna Case was not a Scotswoman, but the name of MacDonald was respected within these gates, no matter who bore it, and this dark man, with the blue eyes that went through you like bright steel blades, didn't look like one who would claim what he had no right to claim. She bade him follow her into the house, which he did; into the hall; and so to a drearier drawing-room than he had ever entered. There had perhaps been some as gray and grim on his island of Dhrum; but in those days he had known nothing of drawing-rooms.

This was not even early Victorian. It was mid-Victorian, and rubbing and brushing had given the ugly furniture no time to mellow. He sat down on a horsehair-covered sofa which had two worked worsted cushions, each stiffly upright in its corner. One represented a dog's head, the other a bunch of white and yellow flowers with a cold background of steel beads. On the walls hung a few steel engravings; a meeting of Covenanters; portraits of unco' guid worthies with sidewhiskers or beards; and some tortured stags pursued or caught by hounds.

"Terrible!" he groaned in spirit. "Who'd suppose that such things existed nowadays?"

He might appropriately have made much the same criticism of the old woman who at that instant opened the door and came in, sturdily, in spite of her limp and the stout stick grasped in a knuckly hand. But as their eyes met — hers like thick glass panes behind which a burning fire could be dimly seen — something in her grim spirit spoke to something as grim and uncompromising far down in his nature. To his own surprise he felt awaking in himself a queer impulse of sympathy for the redoubtable Grandma. Perhaps, reluctantly, she felt the same for him. But she looked him in the face, keenly and unblinkingly. "Well, sir," she said, in a deep voice almost like a man's, and amazingly young and vital, "well, sir, I do not recognize you, though you have gained entrance to my house by claiming the name of MacDonald."

"That is true," replied Ian, who had risen at her coming. "It's the first time I've claimed the name for many years, though it is mine and was my father's before me."

"Who was your father?" the old woman catechized him. "What kin to Duncan, my dead husband's half-brother?"

"No kin except by clan ties. You wouldn't have heard of us. My father was a crofter. His name was David."

"I well remember that man," said Mrs. MacDonald, "and his wife too when I lived with my husband on the island in my youth. Let me see — Mary her name was. They were God-fearing folk, and didn't wear any such grand clothes as you do, not even for their Sunday best."

"I paint people's portraits, you see, and have to live in

cities," explained Ian calmly, though he had grown lazy as he grew rich and had not painted. "My clothes suit my trade and way of life better than my father's would, I think; though, as for my brains, my father's hat would have been too big for them."

"I dare say you are right about the brains. You are that youth who went off to America under the name of Somerled," Mrs. MacDonald severely remarked. "I have read of you in the newspapers; but I never approved of you, sir. It's not man's work, to my mind, smearing canvas with paint, and encouraging silly women to be vain of their faces."

"My portraits aren't considered to have that effect," returned Somerled; "rather the contrary, in some cases. And I'm sorry you don't approve of me, because that makes a bad opening for what I've come to say. However, it can't be helped. I know Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald slightly; met her in America ——"

"If you think an acquaintance with that woman will recommend you to me, sir, you are mightily mistaken," was the answer he got.

"I mention it to make you understand why, when I met her daughter last night, I felt it my duty to do what I could, being of the same name and not quite a stranger to the family."

"Oh, you felt it your duty! Then you're the person mentioned in a letter I received from a certain Mrs. West, according to herself a writer of books. I do not read her sort of books, and never heard of her. 'Motor novels' indeed! What worse than nonsense! Little enough sense fools must have to buy them! If you have come from

this Mrs. West, you can tell her from me, as she has made her bed she may lie in it. She has not taken under her roof my granddaughter, but the daughter of Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald, the play actress. I did my best for the girl, striving to bring her up to be a good and modest woman, despite the bad blood of the mother who broke my son's heart and killed him, who did what she could, and has been doing what she could in the years since, to disgrace our house. I might have known I should strive in vain, and I did know at heart. Vanity and extravagance and fondness of pleasure were Barbara Ballantree's undoing. I preserved her daughter from those dangers, and gave her a religious education. Levity was sternly rebuked in her. She had no young acquaintances to teach her foolishness, or tell her of her mother's sin. She was allowed no money to fritter away on vanities, no silly novels to read, such as those your friends write, no frivolous pursuits which could distract her mind from duty — yet she is her mother over again, and, like her mother, runs away from my house by stealth, in the dead of night."

"It wasn't ten o'clock when I met her in the railway station," Somerled defended the absent. "She was then not very stealthily seeking a train for London, where she expected to find her mother. Mrs. West has written you, I know, and told you everything that happened. For my part, I've called to speak of a plan I have in mind for your granddaughter. The telegram you sent Mrs. West seemed ——"

"The telegram I sent Mrs. West? I've sent no telegram to her nor any one. I don't send telegrams."

"Indeed?" stammered Somerled, taken aback. "I understood — Mrs. West believed the telegram to be from you ——"

"Nothing of the kind. She couldn't have believed it," Mrs. MacDonald shut him up mercilessly. "She must have been 'romancing,' as I suppose she would call it. I should call it lying."

Remembering Aline's words, Somerled also was frankly inclined to call it lying — on the part of the young woman or the old. He would gladly have blamed the elder, but reason rebelled. Whatever Mrs. MacDonald's faults might be, she did not seem to be one who would deliberately tell a lie.

"But why should Mrs. West?" Somerled asked himself, calling up the pretty smile, the soft blue eyes of his friend. He had been inclined to believe her true. He had liked her very much, more than he liked most women, and had wondered if he might not learn to like her still better in time. The women he saw oftenest were mostly nervous, exacting, self-centred creatures, craving constant flattery. Aline was none of these things. She had many charms, and he had seen few defects; but a motive for falseness in the matter of the telegram would suggest itself to his intelligence. He tried to shut the door in its insinuating, conceited grin.

"There must be a mistake — somewhere," he mumbled.

"Not here, anyhow," retorted the old lady.

"After all, it's apart from the question in hand. But perhaps my plans for your granddaughter don't interest you?"

"Not particularly. Still, you may as well tell them. I see you want to."

"And I see" — Somerled squandered a smile, but only because it came spontaneously — "I see that you want to hear them, because," he dared to go on with a flash of his keen eyes into hers, "you *do* care what becomes of Miss MacDonald. If you had not got Mrs. West's letter, you would have had no sleep last night. As it is, knowing your granddaughter has fallen into safe hands, you can comfortably disclaim anxiety."

"You seem to fancy yourself a mind-reader, my good sir," returned Mrs. MacDonald at her haughtiest, or what Barrie would have called her "snortiest." "Think what you like. It is nothing to me, and thinking costs naught. As for the hands she has fallen into, what do I know of them? They may be black with sin for all I can tell. No doubt Barbara Ballantree's daughter would be just as ready to accept help from such hands."

"As a painter, I try to keep mine clean," said Somerled. "I tell you that in earnest, not in joke, because for the present I've constituted myself your granddaughter's guardian. My plan is to take her in my motor-car to Edinburgh, where I shall deliver her safely to Mrs. Bal — Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald. In the car will be Mrs. West and her brother, Basil Norman. Have you anything to say against the plan? If you have, kindly speak now."

"If I did speak, would it prevent your doing what you've made up your mind to do?"

"Perhaps not, unless your reasons appealed to my judgment," Somerled admitted.

"You're no prevaricator, anyhow."

"I don't come of prevaricating stock."

"You don't, if you're David MacDonald's son. He was a humble, God-respecting man. But you have no humble air. You hold your crest high."

Somerled was minded to be impudent and say that in that case he must get his hair cut; but he refrained. "The atmosphere of this house does not conduce to humility, madam," he answered instead — and always as they talked the two looked one another straight and full in the face.

"H'm!" the old woman grunted. Yet there was something vaguely resembling a twinkle in the glass-gray eyes, a gleam which Barrie and few others now living had ever seen; for not more than one or two of her fellow-beings had ever had the slightest idea how to manage Mrs. MacDonald, *née* Ann (scorning an "e") Hillard.

"Go on your motor trip, then, so far as I care," said she, a permission which from her was well-nigh a blessing. "It will probably end in a smash-up before Edinburgh."

"I think not," said Somerled. "I drive myself, and I know how to drive rather well."

"I was not referring to physical results."

"So I presumed. Nor was I," he retorted.

If she found the reply enigmatical she did not say so.

They had not sat down during the conversation. Now, Somerled took a step toward the door. "I'm obliged to you for receiving me, madam," he said as a prelude to departure.

"I received you on the strength of your name," she reminded him.

"Which I don't intend to disgrace in your eyes."

"Why in my eyes? They will not long be looking your way."

"I think they will, as long as I'm in charge of your granddaughter. That's what I mean."

"I do not thank you for the assurance. Except that when she's twenty-one I shall make over certain money of my son's to her, I have washed my hands of the girl."

"I haven't. That's not the kind of washing to make them clean."

"You reproach me, sir!" She glared at him.

"Not at all, madam. Even if I would venture, there's no need, for I think your bark is worse than your bite."

Again she almost twinkled at the wretch's daring. There was excitement in it, which she had not experienced since early married days. Then she had had to do with another MacDonald, and even a Hillard could without disgrace afford to be mastered by a MacDonald of Dhrum.

"When I've put your granddaughter into more suitable guardianship than mine," Somerled went on quickly, "I'll write and tell you."

"Suitable guardianship! It will be some time before I get that letter."

"I thank you for the compliment."

"It was not one."

"You're not to blame if I choose to take it as such."

"I am not to blame in any way in this matter."

"There I'm no judge. It's my own actions I must look after." And again he smiled.

"I advise you to be careful, sir, between Barbara Bal-

lantree and Barribel MacDonald. I wish you joy of them both."

"And what of Aline West?" The question whispered itself in Somerled's ears.

But Mrs. MacDonald knew nothing of Aline West. And Somerled was beginning to think that, for all the boasted sagacity of experience, he knew not much more.

"Thank you for your kind wishes," he said non-committally. "And now I will wish you a good day."

He put out his hand, and, to her own intense surprise when she thought of it afterward, Mrs. MacDonald gave hers. Over the prominent knuckles the old skin lay soft and loose. The grim woman was vaguely pathetic to Somerled in his youth and strength and full tide of success. The touch of the would-be iron hand in the velvet glove of faded age made him conscious of his vast advantage over her. He went away filled with hope, and a curious new joy of life, which was partly the excitement of battle.

"The *heather moon!*" he found himself saying, as he passed out of the ill-kept, once lovely garden where Barrie had often dreamed. Perhaps the thought came then because here and there a patch of heather glorified the weeds, or perhaps because Barrie's dreams still empurpled their birthplace.

## IX

WHEN luncheon-time drew near and Somerled was absent, Aline's heart misgave her. It was useless to argue that he must have lingered in talk with his chauffeur, with whom he had early gone to confer. Reason offered this explanation, which was plausible, and altogether more likely than any other; but instinct was deaf to it. Aline wandered nervously about the house and garden, unable to settle anywhere, and it was an added vexation to her disturbed spirit that Basil should be giving himself heart and soul to the entertainment of that dreadful girl in the summer-house. It was well enough that he should entertain her, and keep her passive, but Aline would have liked him to be a martyr, sacrificing his own inclination for his sister's good. She did not wish to think that there was something about this young, crude creature which attracted men to her, and caused them to find pleasure in her society. Aline's head ached, and she could not think consecutively. Again and again she asked herself, "What shall I do if he has been to see that old woman and found out about the telegram?" but no clear answer would come. She could only repeat the would-be consoling words, "But he *hasn't* been there. It's silly to think of such a thing. He's not that sort of man."

She was in the summer-house with her brother and

Barrie MacDonald when at last Somerled did come. She called to him gayly as he appeared round the corner of an immense architectural rose-bush, and he answered pleasantly. He even met her smile with a smile as friendly to the eye, and there was no definable change in his look or manner, yet — Aline was filled with a cold fear which chilled the perfumed August noon. Her perception of the invisible was as sensitive as the needle of a compass to the thrill of the magnetic north. Her brain suddenly buzzed as if a hive of bees had been let loose in her head. A voice seemed to be yelling in her ears accusations: "What a fool you have been — what a fool you have been! It's all your fault if he has found out. You needn't have done the thing. It wasn't necessary."

She feared to meet Somerled's eyes and read condemnation, yet her very dread forced her to seek them, and learn at once the best or worst, since suspense was unbearable. It seemed to her that he avoided her look; that he too was nervous and uncomfortable, while trying to appear at ease.

For a moment or two he talked of the car, which he had been to see, and of a sight-seeing expedition round Carlisle which Basil had proposed for the afternoon. Then he turned suddenly to Barrie: "I've been thinking over what we can do for you, Miss MacDonald," he said. "We don't know where your mother is now, but we do know that she'll be in Edinburgh the first of next week. Perhaps we might be able to find out her whereabouts meanwhile, but there'd be delay before we could expect answers to inquiries, if she's playing small towns in order to knock her new play into shape. You don't want to go back to

your grandmother's. We're starting off in my car to-morrow. I've undertaken the responsibility of you, so I'm your guardian *pro tem*. I couldn't allow you to hang about alone anywhere. The alternative is, taking you with us in the car. What do you say?"

"Me in a motor-car!" exclaimed Barrie, rapturous. "It can't be true."

"It will be true if you say 'yes.'" Somerled spoke coolly, but it seemed to Aline that his eyes were alight. They were fixed on the girl, noting how she paled and flushed. Her face, seen in the golden lights and green shadows of the summer-house, had the texture of flowers. Aline had not known it was in her to hate any one so bleakly as she hated Barrie MacDonald at this moment; and she hated Somerled too, more than she had hated him last night. She ached to make him suffer as he was making her suffer. If only she could — if she but had the power!

This was the blow she had known would fall: the invitation to Barrie. Now the worst had happened despite the risk she had run for its prevention. And Somerled would not meet her eyes. Did this mean that he not only made light of her arguments, but had found out the falsehood on which they were based?

"Of course I say 'yes!'" Barrie was gayly answering. "It seems more than ever as if I were in a fairy story. Travelling for five days, in a real, live motor-car, to see my real live mother! Oh, if *Grandma* knew!"

"She does know," said Somerled. The words spoke themselves. For once unable to decide quickly and definitely, he had come back from Hillard House to Moor-

hill Farm without making up his mind whether or no to tell how he had spent most of his morning. He had left chance to settle the question; and now it was settled. Still he did not look at Mrs. West. He spoke in a commonplace tone, as if Mrs. MacDonald's knowledge of his plan included no secret knowledge on his part.

"How do you know she knows?" asked Barrie eagerly, leaning toward him with elbows on knees, chin in hand, long red plait falling over shoulder. "You — you haven't *seen* her?"

"I have."

"You met her looking for me!"

"No, not that."

"Then you must have been to Hillard House."

"Yes. I went there to talk with Mrs. MacDonald about you."

To save her life, Aline could not have kept down her agonizing blush. Tears started to her eyes. Though she had been half prepared for this blow, it fell upon her with an almost mortal shock. Ostentatiously, Somerled was keeping his eyes off her face; and that was worse than if he had stared straight into her eyes. Her terrible blush must have touched the consciousness of a blind man. It called Basil's fascinated attention from the girl; and so stricken did his sister look that he would have cried out to ask what was the matter had she not sealed his lips with a glance of desperate command.

There was no longer a grain of doubt. Somerled knew that Mrs. West had lied about the telegram, and everything was changed between them forever. For a moment Aline told herself that there was no hope, there could not

possibly be any; and yet, if he cared for her, would he not forgive? Was there no way of saving the situation, and turning the inevitable change into gain instead of loss? She took a quick and courageous resolution, as a timid woman may when told that her life depends upon a dangerous operation, to be performed instantly or not at all.

"Mr. Somerled," she said, "can I speak to you — just you and me alone for a few minutes?" As she made her plea, she rose from the rustic seat where she had been sitting by her brother's side and opposite Barrie.

"Of course, with pleasure." Somerled rose too, stiff and alert as a soldier on duty. She hated this stiffness, this alertness. It showed her that he was sensitively dreading the scene to come, and hiding reluctance behind a hard, bright shield.

"Mrs. West," Barrie spoke out impulsively, "if you don't want me to go in the car, I won't."

"Of course I want you to go, silly child." Aline tried to withdraw sharpness from her voice, but it was there, like the sting of a wasp in a wound. "Even if I didn't think it wise for some reasons, it isn't my car, you know, but Mr. Somerled's, and he has a perfect right to invite any guests he likes. Don't imagine that I'm going to talk to him about *you*. It's something quite different I have to say."

Barrie was snubbed into instant silence; but as Aline and Somerled walked away together they heard her appeal confidentially to Basil, in a tone of passionate interest: "What *shall* I do about clothes? I can't go off in a motor-car with ——" The rest was lost in distance.

The two walked without speaking as far as the big,

spouting rose-bush and the junction where two paths met. Then, choosing the path which avoided the house, Aline took her life in her hands.

"You mentioned that telegram to Mrs. MacDonald?"

"Yes," confessed Somerled. "The subject came up — accidentally."

"What did she say? I want you to tell me. Afterward I'll explain — why."

"She said that she hadn't sent any telegram; and I saw at once that you must have made a mistake."

"You needn't put it that way to save my feelings!" Aline caught him up, panting a little, not trying to calm herself. "You knew that I had — told you a fib. Be honest with me. You must. And I'll be honest with you."

"I'm glad you're talking to me like this," said Somerled simply, "because I was puzzled, I admit. I couldn't bear to think ——"

"I know exactly what you couldn't bear to think," she cut in, letting herself break into a sob. "You thought: 'Mrs. West has told me a deliberate lie because she's jealous of that child, and doesn't want me to take her in the car.' Oh, don't deny it. I *know*. And it's true. I *was* jealous. I don't dislike the poor little thing. Why should I? She's too insignificant, too much a child in intellect as well as years. But — I wanted you to ourselves. It was horrid of me. Only you can't imagine how I've looked forward to this trip, ever since the day you asked us to take it with you. Before that I was bored with the idea of writing the book we've promised our publishers. Our going with you made all the difference

to me. You see, we got to be such friends on shipboard — that last night. I *am* a jealous friend. I admit it. And it was such a blow to have a stranger thrust upon us — to have *you* thrust her upon us — when you might have guessed how I felt, if we're friends. The telegram this morning was from Sir George. It told me that Mrs. Bal was coming to Edinburgh. Instantly I *knew* you'd ask that girl to go with us there in the car — oh, simply in your kindness of heart to a waif. But I couldn't bear it. I saw everything spoiled — for us all, even you. I was like a disappointed child. I had to do *something* — and on the impulse I made up that fib. I'm not sorry even now — I think. Yet I did mean to tell you, sooner or later, the truth. Honestly, I shouldn't have kept silence long if you hadn't found out. I'm not a coward when it's necessary to be brave."

"I see you're not," said Ian. "You — have paid me a great compliment, and I thank you."

"You thank me for what — precisely? For telling a fib because I wanted to keep my friend to myself — if I could?"

"For liking me well to enough tell it."

"For liking you well enough! Yet now I've shown my liking — and my courage, you like me less."

"No."

"You do!"

"No."

"Prove that."

"How do you want me to prove it?"

Aline's voice was thick. She felt broken, but not beaten yet. "Prove it," she almost whispered, "by

sacrificing that girl to — *our* friendship. When we go back to the summer-house, tell her you've changed your mind; that you'll find out at what place her mother is playing now; and that after all you think it best to send her there at once. You *could* find out easily, you know! And I'd take the child myself if you liked. I'd do that for you, if you'd do what I ask for me."

"You're only trying me, Mrs. West," said Somerled. "You don't really wish me to fail the girl."

"Fail her! What an exaggeration. She *wants* to go to her mother."

"At present she wants to go to her mother by motor-car."

Anger at his obstinacy and her own failure lost Aline her self-control. "You mean you want the girl in your motor-car!" Her manner made the words an accusation. But he took the challenge in silence, walking at her side, his head slightly bent, his hands in his pockets. Aline darted a glance at his profile. His jaw looked set, and he had the expression of a man who would give anything to be smoking a cigarette.

It was too late to grope her way back to the path of tactfulness, and the hot blood in her temples made her indifferent to his opinion, to the future, to everything except her own anger and the need to vent it.

"Silence gives consent," she said bitterly, seeing her hopes lie broken at her feet, but not caring much yet. Only, she knew dully that she would care by and by, care to the sharpest point of agony. "Well, so much for our friendship! I'm sorry. I would have done a good deal for my part of it, but there's a limit, isn't there? And

friendship can't be all on one side. I'm afraid, if you want Miss MacDonald in your car, you'll have to get her another chaperon. I don't engage in that capacity."

Now there was just one last loophole open for Somerled. He could protest that Aline had misunderstood him; that he cared not a hang or anything of that kind whether Miss Barrie MacDonald went to Edinburgh or Jericho; that the only thing which mattered was Mrs. West's friendship. If he said this quickly, she would hold out both hands to him and cry a little, and beg his pardon for being cross. Then they would forgive each other and everything would be as before, or better. But Aline waited breathlessly for an instant, and several more instants: and Somerled said nothing at all. He would have continued to walk slowly on if she had not stopped suddenly in the middle of the path, and brought him up short. Already she was beginning to feel the pain of loss and the weighty irrevocability of everything. "What are we going to do?" she panted, her breast rising and falling alluringly. Her cheeks were bright pink, and her eyes brilliant. Never had she been so near to beauty; but Somerled faced her with a calm very like sullenness.

"What are *you* going to do?" he answered her with a question.

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you and Norman to go motoring with me through Scotland, of course."

"Thank you. But I've made my point, and I must stick to it. Basil and I won't go with you if this girl goes."

'We've quarrelled, then, have we?" he asked. His eyes were blue as the ice of glaciers in his brown face. His

mouth and chin looked hard as iron; and never had Aline liked him half as well.

"Yes, we've quarrelled — if you insist," she said.

"Then I must no longer intrude on you as your guest."

"You'll go ——"

"Naturally I'll go. I can't stay in your house — it's the same as your house — when you think I no longer deserve your friendship. On my side, I think you're unreasonable; but I may be wrong. Perhaps it's I who am unreasonable, and can't see it. Anyhow, I shall have to go."

"I won't have Miss MacDonald in the house a minute after you leave," Aline said, almost threateningly.

"Why should you? Her packing won't take long, poor child."

"You'll have to send her back to her grandmother now," Aline warned him, in a brief flame of defiance.

"That's impossible. I wouldn't break my promise, even if Mrs. MacDonald didn't forbid her the house."

"She can't very well go alone with you to Edinburgh in your car, I suppose?"

"She is going to Edinburgh in my car, but not alone with me. Won't you go too, Mrs. West, and let us forget all this nonsense?"

"You call it nonsense? That shows how little you understand me, how willing you are to spoil everything for the sake of this wretched girl! Basil and I will simply go back to our original plan, and travel through Scotland together in a hired car."

"Luncheon is served, madam," Moore announced, at the turn of the path.

Luncheon — and the world in ruin!

"Mr. Somerled and Miss MacDonald will not be lunching," said Aline icily.

Moore hid surprise by retiring in decorous haste.

"Good-bye, Mrs. West," said Somerled.

He held out his hand, looking at her steadily, but she turned and rushed away from him, crying.

# BOOK II

# ACCORDING TO BARRIE

# I

WHEN the Great Surprise happened, Mr. Norman and I had just been having a very nice talk. I'd never expected to know a real author, and of course I wanted to talk about him, but he would talk about me instead. He asked me questions in quite a different way from his sister's, though I can't put the difference into words. I can only feel it. I know his way made me want to answer him, and hers made me want to slap her. That is queer, because she was not rude, but soft and gentle.

Among other things that Mr. Norman teased me to tell, was about the silly stories which I've always been scribbling secretly ever since the time when I had to print because I hadn't learned to write. He said that he would like to see them, but I told him they were torn up, even the last one, which I stuffed into the chimney in my room before I ran away from Grandma's. Then he said I must write another, and he would help me. I *was* excited when he went on to say that people who took to writing like ducks to water when they were almost babies, without any one advising them, generally had real talent. This made me wild to begin writing again at once, and I envied him because he and Mrs. West had planned out a story all about their motor trip in Scotland. I thought it would be the greatest fun to write of things that were

actually happening; but he explained that he wasn't going to bring in the real people or what they did or said, only the scenery and perhaps a few of the adventures, glorified a little. I told him that I should enjoy even more writing things exactly as they were in life; then he argued that if one did it in that way it wouldn't be a story, but a kind of diary.

Perhaps this *is* a kind of diary, but I feel as if I must write it, especially as, because of what happened while we were talking, Mr. Norman's story can't be written after all. At least it can't be written about this trip and this beautiful car.

That prim maid Moore, who looks as if she'd had a rush of teeth to the head, minced to the door of the summer-house where we were sitting, and called us to luncheon. Of course that interrupted our conversation, but Mr. Norman said it must be "continued in our next," like a serial story and we'd make the most of our time between Carlisle and Edinburgh. "You'll let me help you all I can, won't you, Miss MacDonald?" he asked. I said "Yes," and thanked him; and then he exclaimed, "Let's shake hands on the compact."

I didn't know precisely what a compact was, but I shook hands, because most things which begin with "com" are pleasant. Just as we were giving the last shake, Mr. Somerled appeared, and I felt myself getting red, because his eyes looked so blue and fierce, as if he were vexed about something.

"We're striking a bargain," Mr. Norman explained. "Miss MacDonald has promised to let me help her up the ladder of fame as an author. How many

days are you going to give us together in your motor-car?"

"My dear chap, I'm sorry to tell you that Mrs. West and I have just had a row," said Mr. Somerled, "and she's backed out of the trip."

I've always laughed when I've heard or read the expression, "his face fell"; but faces do fall. Mr. Norman's chin seemed suddenly to grow inches longer. "Backed out of the trip!" he echoed, as if he couldn't believe his ears.

"Yes. I asked her to reconsider, but made a mess of it. I fear there's no hope that she'll change her mind. She says you and she will take your trip alone."

I quite wished that he'd invite Mr. Norman to break off from his sister, but he didn't. Perhaps that would not have been etiquette. I don't know anything about such things. The etiquette book Heppie lent me to read once was too uninteresting, worse than Hannah More.

Mr. Norman's face went on falling. His sister would not have been complimented if she had seen it.

"In fact," Mr. Somerled added, "I'm afraid this is good-bye. Mrs. West doesn't expect" — he stopped and laughed a little — "doesn't expect Miss MacDonald and me to stay to luncheon."

I see now that it was horrid of me, but I clapped my hands, and cried out, "How thrilling!" Mr. Norman turned red. I hope he didn't think I was ungrateful. It wasn't that at all which made me clap my hands. It was being coupled with Mr. Somerled in the row, and wondering what was going to become of us both.

"It's like Adam and Eve being turned out of Paradise,

by the Angel with the Flaming Sword," I said, to make things better; and perhaps it did, for they both laughed this time, but it was very queer laughter. If Heppie had heard *me* laugh like that, she would have accused me of hysterics. But it was good for Mr. Norman, and stopped his face from falling. He stammered regrets and apologies and suggestions, and Mr. Somerled seemed upset, too, though not excited, like Mr. Norman and me. He went into the house to collect our belongings, and I *was* thankful not to meet Mrs. West. She kept out of our way, but one of the servants helped Mr. Somerled, who has no man to look after him, and another, not that horrid Moore, offered to help me, but I said, "No, thank you." I knew she would make fun of my bundle to the others afterward. All the maids have stick-out teeth in this house, as if they'd been engaged on purpose, and somehow it makes them seem formidable, like having ogresses to do your packing.

Fancy Mr. Somerled, in the midst of his worry, remembering that I might want to give money to Mrs. West's servants! He doesn't seem the sort of man who would think of little things like that, but I begin to see already that it isn't easy to guess what he is like really, unless he chooses to let one do so. As we were on the way to the house, he said to me in a low tone, "Here's an installment of what I owe you for your brooch," and quickly he slipped a lot of gold and silver into my hand, making my fingers shut round the coins.

"But you haven't got the brooch yet," I whispered back.

"I'll trust you," he said, in an absent-minded way, as

already his thoughts had rushed off to something else. And no wonder!

I gave a ten-shilling piece to the maid, with a grand air which must have impressed her, because she treated me almost respectfully after that, and secretly smuggled down my ugly bundle to the front gate, where, in a few minutes more, Mr. Somerled's big car came to fetch us away. Some one must have been sent to fetch it, and there were a few crumbs on the chauffeur's coat, which made me fancy he'd been called away in the midst of his luncheon, poor man. He must have been surprised, but he had that ineffable marble-statue look which I've noticed on the faces of grand coachmen driving high-nosed old ladies in glittering carriages through the streets of Carlisle. Heppie says that the true test of a well-trained servant is to show no emotion in any circumstances whatever; so I suppose this big chauffeur, whose name is Vedder, must be very well trained indeed. He is a strange looking man, but very smart, and, being a Cockney, carefully puts all his "h's" in the wrong place. If he forgets to do this, he goes back and pronounces the word over again. He travelled to America from London to be Mr. Somerled's coachman years ago, and then he learned how to drive a motor-car and be a mechanic, because he couldn't bear to have his master tearing over the earth with any one else. Mr. Somerled told me all this, coming from the railway station, when he was bringing me to Moorhill Farm.

Mr. Norman saw us off, and was very cast down as Mr. Somerled's luggage was put on the car, but he was so loyal to his sister, that he would not say much except, "I'm sorry!" over and over again.

I was afraid that Mr. Somerled would drive (as he told me the night before he liked driving his own car) and leave me sitting alone in the immense gray automobile, which has a glass front and a top you can put up or down. But to my joy he got in beside me, and let Vedder take the wheel in those large, well-made hands which carry out the marble-statue idea. I had no notion where we were going; and Vedder drove so slowly that I guessed he was expecting further instructions.

As soon as we were safely away from the gate I asked the question burning on my tongue: "You *won't* take me to Grandma?"

"I thought you trusted me as I trusted you," was the only answer Mr. Somerled condescended to make.

Suddenly I saw myself a selfish pig. "I do trust you," I insisted. "But I *ought* to want to go back of my own accord, rather than let you give up — things — for me. I'm nothing to you ——"

"You're Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald's daughter, and — er — a fellow-being."

"If it comes to that, I suppose a worm's a fellow-being. But this worm has turned, and would as soon cross the path of a perfectly ravenous early bird as go to its grandmother. So I won't do that, even for your sake, though you've been so kind; but I wish you'd drop me at the station where you found me, and let me travel to Edinburgh by train. I can wait there for mother ——"

"Nonsense!" he broke in; a word he seems devoted to, as he has already used it several times to pound down some suggestion of mine as if he were breaking it with

a hammer. He has the air of a man used to getting his own way with the world, anyhow with women, and I can't think it good for him; though Mrs. West's one idea apparently is to do what will please him, not fussily, but gently and sweetly; so that must be what men like. I should pity him if he lived with Grandma! I suppose it is my living with her for so long which makes me feel like going against strong, dictatorial people, just to see what they will do. With him, that plan would be exciting. It is ungrateful of me, but I long to contradict him about something, it doesn't matter what, and try my naughty little strength against his, like a headstrong, conceited mouse pitting itself against a lion.

I had no inclination to contradict or fight with Mr. Norman. But he has pathetic, wistful eyes, asking for kindness, whereas Mr. Somerled's look bored with things, as if he needed waking up.

I thought these thoughts while he went on to remind me more gently, that he'd promised to motor me to Edinburgh, and that he had quite a strong weakness for not breaking promises.

"But I give you back this one unbroken, not even cracked," said I. "So that's different."

"I don't choose to take it back," said he. "You'll humiliate me if you refuse to go to Edinburgh in my car — with a competent chaperon, of course."

"A chaperon! My gracious!" I couldn't help laughing. "Aren't you chaperon enough — a great big, grown-up man?"

"I suppose you think me very old," said he; "and so I am, compared to you; but I'm afraid — no, I'm *not*

afraid — to tell you the truth, I'm extremely glad that I haven't come yet to the chaperon age."

"What is the chaperon age for a man?" I inquired.

"Seventy."

"And you won't be that for a long time," I added dreamily, wondering how old he really was.

For an instant his eyes waked up thoroughly, and he looked as if he were in a fury; then he burst out laughing. But his brown face was rather red when he asked if I would mind mentioning my honest impression of his age.

I thought a minute, and then said that perhaps he might be — well, nearly thirty. He laughed again, and seemed relieved, but wanted to know if thirty struck me as old or young. I didn't know what to answer, not to be impolite, so I said presently that I had always thought of thirty as being the year when you were not middle-aged yet, though anything that happened to you *after* your thirtieth birthday couldn't matter. "Still," I went on, "you look young. Only, there's something important and decided about you, as if you must have been grown up for a long time."

"Not to deceive you, I'm thirty-four," he said. "Now, no doubt, you'll consider me a sort of Ancient Mariner. Perhaps that's all the better."

"Looking at you, I can't, even if it would be better," I had to confess. "You're so alive — so strong, so — almost violent. I can't somehow imagine that you've ever been younger, or that you can ever grow older."

Just then, when we'd forgotten the chaperon part of our conversation, the car slowed down and Vedder made a kind of signal of distress. Mr. Somerled put his head

out through the open window, whereupon I think Vedder must have reminded him that we were coming into town, wanting to know what he was to do next. In came Mr. Somerled's smooth black head again, and he glared at me in a kind of amused desperation. "You must know some one who would act as your chaperon for a few days, at a good salary — sent home by train when we'd done with her. That ex-governess or nurse of yours, you told me about."

"Oh, Heppie wouldn't be found *dead* leaving Grandma," said I. "Not that she loves her. Neither does a mouse love a cat, when it won't try to escape. It keeps running back and being polite with its eyes bulging out.'

"There must be somebody else. Think. Has your grandmother any friends?"

"Dear me, no. She'd scorn it. Only a few acquaintances and a relation or two, whom she snubs when they come to see her and scolds if they don't. They wouldn't — but, oh, perhaps Mrs. James *might*. I wonder?"

"Where does Mrs. James live?"

I told him quickly that it was in a little sort of cul-de-sac street called Flemish Passage, not far from English Street, where Heppie and I sometimes look at the shops; and I was going on to say more about it and about Mrs. James, but before I'd time to draw another breath, Mr. Somerled grabbed up a speaking tube and was talking through it. "Find Flemish Passage near English Street, and I'll tell you where to stop," he addressed the back of Vedder's massive head.

"It's an old curiosity shop, and she keeps it," I hurried to explain, but that didn't seem to matter to Mr. Somerled.

"I hope you like the lady's society," was all he said.

"I love her, and she's an angel, but a very peculiar angel; and Grandma doesn't call her a lady, so perhaps you won't," I broke the news to him.

"I daresay your grandmother wouldn't have called my mother a lady," he replied coolly. "She was an angel, and the cleverest, most gracious woman I ever knew or expect to know." I did like him for saying this. And something told me that, in spite of his domineering way with me, he wouldn't be one to put on high and mighty airs with Mrs. James, as Grandma does.

English Street, of course, is the main street of Carlisle and runs north to William Rufus's Castle that stands looking over the moors toward the border, eight miles away. Grandma never would let Heppie take me into the Castle, because it's turned into barracks now, and swarming with soldiers. She said that her father called soldiers Men of Blood, and seemed to think that ought to put me off from wishing to go in, but it didn't a bit, rather the other way round. I love soldiers in books, and should like to meet some.

It was near the old Citadel of Henry VIII, where the towers have been turned into court-houses, that we had to turn off, and it is there that English Street really begins. It didn't take Vedder long to find Flemish Passage — which Mrs. James says is named after the Flemish masons William Rufus brought over to make the Castle, men who settled down afterward to live in Carlisle. Maybe there were Flemish houses on the spot in those days — who knows? I love to think there were; and though there isn't a trace of anything half so ancient as William,

Flemish Passage can't have changed much from what it must have been in the Middle Ages. Even the people who live there are mostly old, and as the big gray car turned into the small, quiet cul-de-sac, elderly heads appeared at antique windows of all the mediæval houses. I should think nothing so exciting had happened in Flemish Passage at all events since Carlisle surrendered to Prince Charlie. The car looked enormous, as if it were a dragon swelling to twice its size in rage because it knew there would be no room for it to turn round when it wanted to get out.

Mrs. James's house used to be like the others till she had the two front windows thrown into one, and took to keeping a shop. The way she happened to do that was just as it was with Miss Mattie in that darling "Cranford" I found with father's name in it; only Mrs. James, of course, was married and Miss Mattie wasn't. I wanted to tell Mr. Somerled about her, and how her husband, a distant cousin of Grandma's, was the doctor who couldn't cure my father. Mrs. James herself wasn't a cousin, and wasn't even of the north, so Grandma never thought anything of her, as she has no opinion of southern people. Mrs. James was Devonshire, and (in Grandma's eyes) a *mésalliance* for Richard James. He lodged with the Devonshire girl's mother when he was a medical student in London, Heppie told me once; and even Heppie puts on superior airs with Mrs. James, whom she considers a feckless creature. I have an idea that Heppie knew the doctor before he met his wife, and that he was her One Romance; so naturally she thinks the "James Mystery" wouldn't have happened if he had married her instead.

Of course, though, it could never have occurred to *any one* to marry Heppie, whereas Mrs. James must always have been a darling and very pretty in her fluffy way. Grandma says the "James Mystery" (as it seemed it was called in the newspapers at the time, when I was very small) never was a mystery except for "fools or sensation-mongers." I heard her speak those very words to poor Mrs. James, who has always called on Grandma once a month, ever since I can remember, though Grandma does nothing but make herself disagreeable and say things to hurt Mrs. James's feelings, knowing her one dream of happiness is in believing her husband still lives.

Nobody else believes this, Heppie has told me; because Doctor James had a motive for not wishing to live, "apart from any disappointment in his home life." After he didn't cure my father there was another case which he was supposed not to have understood. I don't know exactly what happened, for my questions weren't encouraged; but he operated on the person when he ought not, or else didn't operate when he ought; anyhow, the person was a high personage, so there was trouble, and there might have been a legal inquiry if Doctor James hadn't gone one day to Seascale, and from there disappeared. His hat was found on the beach, and a coat, and though his body was never recovered, all the world except his wife felt sure he had drowned himself on purpose. As for her, she is perfectly certain that he is alive, and she hopes to this day that some time he will come back to her, or else send for her to go to him.

He disappeared or died, or whatever it was, seventeen years ago when I was almost a baby; and he and Mrs.

James weren't so very young even then: but because he admired what he called her "baby face," she has always tried desperately to keep her looks that he mayn't find her changed when (she doesn't say "if") they meet again. It is the most pathetic thing I ever heard of, because in spite of all the troubles she has had, enough to make her old twice over, she has never lost gayety or courage. Grandma and Heppie think it wicked and frivolous of her not to "bow to God's will," but I think she is a marvel, and I love every little funny way and trick she has.

I don't know Mrs. James well enough to call her my friend, because I don't often see her, and we've never been left alone together when she's called on Grandma; Heppie took me to her house only once, just after she'd grown poor through the breaking of some savings-bank, and turned her little drawing-room into an antique shop. I fancy Heppie wanted to go simply to spy out the nakedness of the land and satisfy curiosity in Grandma. But I've never forgotten that day, and how brave and bright Mrs. James was, selling off the pretty old things which she had loved: heirlooms of her family and her husband's; old clocks, old vases, old ornaments, and jewels, old china and glass, old samplers and bits of embroidery or brocade, old furniture, old pictures and transparencies, and everything of value except old books, which she adored because his library had been her husband's life. It was clever of her, I think, to group the treasures together in the little drawing-room with its oak panelling and beams, its uneven, polished oak floor, and the two diamond-paned windows which she enlarged and threw into one.

It is not like a shop, but just a charming room crowded full of lovely things, and every one of them for sale, even the chairs. She wrote cards of advertisement which the hotel people let her pin up in their halls or offices, because they respected her pluck, and had liked Doctor James. Americans and other travellers saw the advertisements, and went to her house; so by and by Mrs. James made a success with her experiment. When most of her own antiquites were sold, she could afford to buy others, just as good or better, to take their places. She never made big sums of money; but maybe that was because she had debts of her husband's to pay off, which she kept secret. Besides, she is so generous and kind that she would give good prices for things in buying, and ask small ones in selling.

"Mrs. James: Antiquities;" it says in gilt letters over the door on which you can still see the mark left by the professional name-plate of Doctor James. His wife had that taken off before she opened her shop, because she felt that her "going into trade might seem to discredit his honoured name."

That is her great watchword: "his honoured name." I've often heard her repeat it to Grandma, who invariably snorts and says something to dishearten or humiliate the poor humble darling who thinks so much of the Hillard and James families, and so little of herself.

Opening the door, which rings a bell of its own accord, you walk straight into the drawing-room, or hall. There's an oak screen which cuts off your view to the left, and gives an opportunity for surprises; and straight ahead at the back is a lovely old carved stairway, that goes up

steeply, with two turns and two platforms, where stand tall, ancient clocks. Behind this hall or drawing-room, turned into a shop, is a tiny parlour, where Mrs. James spends her few free hours, eats her tiny, lonesome meals, and faithfully reads nearly every book in her husband's library, so that she may be an intelligent companion for him if he comes back. The walls of the parlour are covered with his books, on shelves reaching up nearly as high as the low-beamed ceiling. Behind the parlour is the kitchen, which looks into a tiny garden with one lovely apple tree in it; and a back stairway almost like a ladder leads to what used to be servants' rooms. Now Mrs. James sleeps in one; and next door is the young girl, rescued from something or other by the Salvation Army, who is her only servant. The front part of the "upstairs," which you reach by the lovely staircase in the shop, is occupied by a curate-lodger. Heppie says Mrs. James can afford to give up having a lodger now, and that she keeps him on only because she's stingy; or else because she thinks it "distinguished" to have some connection with "Church." But I'm sure it's really because she's so kind and good-natured, that she can't bear to turn the curate away from rooms which have been his only home for years.

She *was* surprised to see me get out of an automobile with a man! I know she did see me get out, because she opened the door herself, exclaiming in her soft Devonshire voice, which has never been hardened by the north, "Why, Barribel, my *dear* child, can I *believe* my eyes?"

She throws emphasis on a great many words when she talks, which Heppie says is gushing, and not reserved

enough for a true lady; but I like it when Mrs. James does it, because it sounds cordial, and more interested in you than any other person's way of talking which I ever heard.

I introduced Mr. Somerled, and hurried in the next breath to explain that he was a MacDonald, because that made him seem like a relation, and she wouldn't think to begin with that I was with a perfect stranger. But as soon as I said "Somerled," she knew all about him, not only the history of the first Somerled, which, of course, she *would* know, but that this one was a great celebrity. *I* shouldn't have known that, if Mr. Norman hadn't mentioned it: and Moore with the teeth told me, too, that she'd heard Mrs. West say he was "a millionaire." I'm not sure if Mrs. James knew about the millions, and even if she did, they wouldn't seem half as important to her as his pictures, which she began to chat about. Of course they're not as important, because anybody can have millions by accident, but they can have genius only from what they are in themselves. I felt more than ever how wonderful it was that he should be so good to me; a person so flattered and run after; but all the same I *couldn't* make myself feel in awe of him. He seemed to me just a Man: and I wanted as much as ever to see what he would do if I took my own way and went against him.

Mrs. James invited us into the house in her cordial, emphatic way, while our coming and our being together were still mysteries which must have puzzled her wildly. I saw by the blue flash in Mr. Somerled's eyes that the artist in him admired the shop-drawing-room, and I

thought from his manner that he had taken a fancy to Mrs. James herself. I am so used to her looks, from seeing her once a month ever since I can remember, that I can hardly judge what she is like: and I suppose she *is* peculiar. But why shouldn't she try to keep young for the sake of her dream? I think it's romantic and beautiful, and all one with her efforts to become the intellectual equal of her lost husband. Grandma and Heppie sneer after Mrs. James has been and gone, at the long words she uses, and condemn her for wanting to deceive people into thinking she's much younger than she is. But that is because they've no romance in them, and can't understand her true motive.

Her figure is like a young girl's, though perhaps a little stiffer and less rounded. She is short, and has the tiniest waist in the world, so tiny that it must hurt her to breathe, but that is her chief pride, because "the doctor" (as she always calls him) fell in love at first sight with her slender waist; and she has never let it measure an inch more than it did then. A big man could span it with his hands. Perhaps Doctor James could. She dresses her hair now as he liked best seventeen years ago, though the fringe looks old-fashioned and odd. Grandma says her hair is bleached, otherwise it couldn't have kept its yellow colour at her age, forty-five. But it shines and is a lovely golden. She takes the greatest pains in doing it, too, even when she's in a hurry on a cold winter's morning, because she's never sure "the doctor" mayn't appear that day, to give her a surprise. It would be too bad if, after all these years, he should walk in and find her not looking her best!

She has features like a doll's, with large dark blue eyes, and high arched eyebrows which give her an innocent, expectant expression. Heppie says she blacks them; but Heppie has no eyebrows at all, so it's difficult for her to believe in other people's.

When Mrs. James came to meet us at the door, she had a ladies' paper in her hand, open at a page where it told you in big letters, "How to be Beautiful Forever," so I suppose it's true, as Heppie says, that she's always looking for recipes to keep young. She had on a lavender muslin dress, very becoming to her fair complexion, which would be perfect if she hadn't a very few little veins showing in the pink of her cheeks, and some faint, smiling-lines round her eyes, which you see only if you stare rudely as Grandma does, to "take down Mrs. James's vanity." Lavender was the doctor's favourite colour, and she invariably wears one shade or another of it. She never would go into mourning for him, as people thought she ought to do when he disappeared.

I explained everything, talking so fast that I got out of breath, while Mr. Somerled walked round the room looking at the curiosities. I was glad no customers came in to interrupt; but luckily there wasn't much danger at that hour, as it wasn't yet half-past two, and people had scarcely finished their luncheons. As I talked, she gave little exclamations almost like the cooing of a dove; and the most desperate thing in our story seemed to be, in her opinion, the fact that we hadn't lunched.

She insisted on giving us eggs and apple-tart and coffee in her own dining-room, and she let us come into the kitchen and help cook. Mr. Somerled looked quite young

and boyish. We all three laughed a good deal. Not a word did Mr. Somerled say about my going to Edinburgh or the chaperon business until we'd finished our picnic meal, and he had selected several of the best and most expensive things in the shop for himself. After that, how could Mrs. James refuse him what he called "a great favour" even if she'd wished to say no, which she didn't. On the contrary, she was enchanted. Everything had worked together to make her going possible. The curate had gone off for a holiday, giving her permission to use his two rooms if she liked. I could have them till we started; and she would ask a friend from next door to attend to the shop, a nice girl who often helped her, if she were ill or had to go away on a "curiosity quest." "Just think!" she exclaimed, "I've never been to Scotland, though it's only eight miles distant, and I've pined to go all my life. You'll find that I've a good book-knowledge of the country, if that's any use, for my dear husband's favourite pastime has been the study of history. Since he — left Carlisle, I've devoted much time to following his researches."

The long words do come so nicely from her pretty little mouth, and she shapes them with such care, that they seem to issue forth one by one like neatly formed birds being let out of a cage. She is making a speciality of pronunciation, and what she sometimes speaks of as "refined wording." She was a farmer's daughter in Devonshire.

It was arranged that the girl from next door should be called in at once, in order that Mrs. James and I might go and buy things. I was rich on the proceeds of the brooch;

for Mr. Somerled counted out the rest of the money on the parlour table; and Mrs. James abetted him in saying that fifty pounds was not a penny too much to lend on such a treasure. But it does seem wonderful! Mrs. James herself must have felt flush after making such good sales, and her eyes lit at the thought of a motor hat and coat — they seemed exciting purchases. But when Mr. Somerled mentioned the fact that mother is one of the best-dressed women in the world, the little woman looked frightened. "I shan't dare take the responsibility of choosing an outfit for the child, then," said she nervously. (I do wish people wouldn't call me "child," though it's nicer from Mrs. James than Mrs. West!) "Supposing she shouldn't make the correct impression? Won't you be persuaded to help us, sir, with your advice about the most important articles?"

Somehow I feel that Mr. Somerled hates "sir" as much as I hate "child." I expected him to make an excuse, that he knew nothing about such things — or "articles," according to Mrs. James. But instead, he snapped at the suggestion and looked as pleased as Punch. I suppose he doesn't want me to be a fright and disgrace his car on the journey.

When Miss Hubbell had come in from the next house, smelling of some lovely sort of jam which she and her mother had been making, off we three went in the gray automobile, Mrs. James trying not to look self-conscious and proud, nor to give little jumps and gasps when she thought we were going to run over creatures.

It is many years since she has been to London. I think she was there on her wedding trip and never since: and

besides that expedition, Exeter and Carlisle are her two largest cities: but, in order to impress the great artist, she patronized Carlisle, saying we "mustn't hope for London shops." I longed to catch his eye, because I'm sure he sees everything that is funny; but it would have been horrid to laugh at the kind darling, trying to be a woman of the world.

In the end, it was Mr. Somerled and I who chose everything, even Mrs. James's motor coat and hat, for she was too timid to decide; and if she had decided, it would have been to select all the wrong things. I had to get my dresses ready-made, because of starting for Scotland next morning, and it was funny to see how difficult Mr. Somerled was to please. One would have thought he took a real interest in my clothes; but of course it was owing to his artistic nature. We found a blue serge — I wouldn't have believed, after my deadly experience, that blue serge could be so pretty — and a coat and skirt of creamy cloth; and an evening frock of white chiffon, I think the girl called it. Actually it has short sleeves above my elbows, and quite a low neck, that shows where my collar-bone used to be when I was thinner than I am now. It seems an epoch to have a dress like that. It was Mr. Somerled who picked it out from among others, and insisted on my having it, though, simple as it looked, it was terribly expensive. Mrs. James thought I couldn't afford it, as I had so many things to do with my fifty pounds, but Mr. Somerled brushed aside her objections in that determined way he has even in little things. He said that it would be money in his pocket, as an artist, to paint me in this gown; and that I must sit for him in

it. He would call his picture "The Girl in the White Dress"; and as he'd show it in London and New York and get a big price, of course he must be allowed to pay for the dress. Mrs. James seemed doubtful about the propriety, but he drew his black eyebrows together, and that made her instantly quite sure he must be right. When she'd agreed to my having the dress on those terms, she couldn't — as he said — stick at a mere hat, so he bought me a lovely one to wear with the creamy cloth. He suggested that I should keep it in the "tire box" while motoring — a huge round thing on the top of the car.

"It is just like having a kind uncle, isn't it, my dear?" asked Mrs. James. But I didn't feel that Mr. Somerled was the sort of man I could *ever* think of as a kind uncle, and I said so before I'd stopped to wonder if it sounded rude. Luckily he didn't seem offended.

I am writing this in the curate's sitting-room upstairs in Mrs. James's house. It is night, and we are to start to-morrow morning very early, because I happened to mention that I'd never seen the inside of Carlisle Castle, or put my nose into the Cathedral. Grandma does not approve of cathedrals, and their being historic makes no difference. Mr. Somerled said that we could visit both, and then "slip over the border." Oh, that border! How I have thought of it, as if it were the door of Romance; and so it is, because it is the door of Scotland. I am afraid it must be a dream that I shall cross at last, to see the glories on the other side, and find the lovely lady who to me is Queen of all Romance — my mother. Still, I've pinched myself several times, and instead of waking

up in my old room at Hillard House each time I've found myself with my eyes staring wide open, in the curate's room, which has a lot of books in it and a smell of tobacco smoke, and on the mantelpiece Mrs. James's wedding wreath as an ornament under a glass case.

Mr. Somerled has gone to a hotel; but he stayed to supper with us, and Mrs. James brought out all her nicest things. It was much pleasanter than supper last night at Moorhill Farm, though Mrs. West had lovely things to eat. I am glad I shall never see Moore again! But I should like to see Mr. Norman. I could feel toward him as if he were a brother. But I don't know what to say about my feeling toward Mr. Somerled. I think of him as of a knight, come to the rescue of a forlorn damsel in an enchanted forest. After delivering the damsel from one dragon — Grandma — he is going to take her away with another quite different sort of a dragon; a well-trained, winged dragon, which people who don't know any better believe to be only a motor-car.

## II

I DON'T know how I dared with such a man, but I talked foolish fairy talk to Mr. Somerled, *alias* the Knight, this morning, and he answered gravely in the same language. I should be doing him a great service, he said, if I could lead him back to fairyland, because he used to know the way, but had lost it long ago. He had given up the hope of finding it again, and until the other day had feared that all the fairies were dead.

"If you find fairyland, it ought to be while the heather moon shines," I told him. "But I shan't have much time to help you look for it, because in five days you'll be leaving me with mother, and travelling on alone. You must search for the key to the rainbow wherever you go; because, you know, it might be *anywhere*, and the light of the heather moon would show it gleaming in the grass, or under a flower, or even in the middle of the road before your eyes."

He looked at me in an odd, almost wistful way, and I couldn't look away from him, though I wanted to, for it was as if he were reading my inmost Me — using my eyes for windows, of which I couldn't draw the curtains.

"*You* might find the key, if you haven't got it already," he said. "Anyhow, I can't find it without your help. But no matter. Perhaps I shouldn't know what to do with it if I did, now I've grown old and disillusioned."

Then I answered, because I couldn't help it under the spell of his eyes. "You're not old or disillusioned. You're a Knight: and knights who rescue damsels are always young and brave."

Before I saw him, if any one had told me a person of over thirty was not middle-aged, I should have thought it nonsense. But now I see that even *thirty-four* is not old. It seems exactly the right age for a man.

"If you dub me Knight, I christen you Princess," said he, laughing as if embarrassed, yet pleased. "Because, I confess I wandered near enough to the border last night, to think of you as a princess who'd been shut up in a glass retort, as all really nice princesses were in my day, in fairyland. Now the retort has been opened, though the princess believed it to be hermetically sealed ——"

"It was the knight who opened it!" I interrupted him. "But did you *really* go near to the border?"

"The border of fairyland."

"Oh! I meant Scotland. But, after all, to me it seems much the same thing. Doesn't it to you?"

"I haven't thought of it so for a good many years," he said. "Yet it might be ——"

I lost the rest, because Mrs. James came in, ready to start. We had been standing together in the little sitting-room at the back of the house while she gave last directions to Miss Hubbell. And I had on my new serge, of course, with a blouse more fit for an angel than Barrie MacDonald; and a gray coat and a gray hood with a long gray veil floating out from it — all the same gray as the car, and chosen to match. I couldn't help thinking, when I put on the hood before the curate's looking-glass, that in spite

of a green crack across my face and one purple splash on my eye (it's a very antique glass, not used to girls' complexions) I really wasn't so bad. Oh, if only mother is pleased! But of course all mothers must be pleased with their children. One reads a great deal in books about mother's love.

We bought two small trunks yesterday, one for Mrs. James and one for me, of the same gray colour as our cloaks, both made especially for a motor-car: and Mr. Somerled has a gray trunk too, smaller than mine, also a thing he calls a suit-case. This morning he brought us each a present of a little gray handbag, fitted with brushes and combs and a mirror, and tiny bottles for eau-de-cologne. My fittings look like gold, though I suppose of course they are only gilded; and Mrs. James's are silver. She thought it would hurt his feelings if we refused to accept his presents, though she was brought up to believe that a lady must never take anything from a gentleman except books, sweets, and flowers. However, she says she has often found it difficult to conduct life according to rules of etiquette, as there are so many complications they've forgotten to put in.

It was only half-past eight when we started, for we wanted to see the Cathedral and the Castle. We were going to the Cathedral first, and on the way we had to pass a big motor garage which has always made my heart beat just to see, whenever Heppie and I have come to town shopping. I used to wonder what it would be like to sail through the wide doorway in a car of my own. Poor me, in my "glass retort," with little chance, it seemed, of escaping from the dragon to travel in any sort

of mobile except the pillow-mobile into which I used often to jump at night, and flash away to far-off countries of dreamland.

Now, poking its large nose out of that garage was a gray motor (but not so nice a gray as ours) conducted by a wisp of a chauffeur. He was driving two passengers, and I bounced on the springy back seat of our car with surprise as I recognized them. Down went my head mechanically in as polite a bow as if I hadn't been turned out of her house by Mrs. West, though, when I realized what I was doing, I was afraid she might pretend not to know me. It must make one feel such a worm to be ignored when one has just grinned and ducked! But I needn't have feared. Mr. Norman took off his cap as impressively as if I were really the princess of the knight's fairy dream; and Mrs. West bowed, with a sweet, sad look first at Mr. Somerled, then finishing up with me — just the reproachful, yet resigned martyr-look a queen ought to give a crowd of rebellious subjects on her way to the scaffold where their cruelty had sent her.

Of course, if I had to show this to Mr. Norman, and get him to criticise my writing as he offered to do, I couldn't put in such things; so perhaps it's as well I shall have to worry on alone.

Mr. Somerled, who was driving our car (with Vedder by his side, tooting a musical horn), took off his cap as beautifully as Mr. Norman did, without upsetting the steering, though there seemed to be a hundred things and creatures of all descriptions in front of the motor's big bright nose at that particular moment. I'd never realized until then what a crowded, busy place Carlisle is; because it seems

that you have a different set of emotions and impressions especially for use in motor-cars, and you *have* to use them there, whether you like or not. I suppose they lay quiescent in people for thousands of years, between the epoch of exciting prehistoric beasts and automobiles; but now they come into play often enough to make up for lost time. Not that I was afraid in the car, even at first: only it did seem as if all the things that moved on the face of the earth were aiming directly at us, to say nothing of what we ourselves were doing to them. Luckily for me, I trusted Mr. Somerled; and perhaps Mrs. James hadn't quite arrived at that blissful state, or else she was naturally more timid, for she held on so fast to the arm of the seat that she tore a glove, and had a strained expression about her eyes and nostrils, though she beamed in a painstaking way whenever she caught me looking at her.

"Who is that pretty blond lady and the handsome dark young man you just bowed to?" she asked, when we had passed the gray car that was like a bad copy of ours.

I told her that the man was Mr. Basil Norman and the lady was Mrs. West, who had quarrelled with Mr. Somerled yesterday for some reason he wouldn't explain, but probably because she couldn't be bothered with me.

"Poor thing, she looked ready to cry!" sighed Mrs. James. "By this time, I dare say, she's sorry for what she did, and praying for a chance to make up."

It would be Christian to pray for it too; but if making up means having her in this car, I should have to pound the prayer into my heart like a nail.

There was no luggage in the other car, so I guessed that they were trying it, to see whether they might like to hire

it for their trip. And, in spite of Mr. Norman being so kind and different from his sister, I couldn't help hoping that they might begin with another part of Scotland from ours.

I kept on thinking of them as we wound through the traffic, though dear Mrs. James continued to talk in an approving way, suited to my intelligence, about Carlisle, and what a wonderful place it was, and how proud we ought to be of it. How wide and well-built the new streets were, and how interesting the old ones! How good for the complexion were the winds that blew from the great moorland spaces beyond the town! I hadn't thought much about all that myself, but certainly Carlisle is romantic as a city, because in history you see how it has always been a solid bulwark of the English, against which tides of invasion dashed themselves in vain — a sort of watch-tower, whence England gazed out across the border where danger lay in wait. I can't help turning my mind to the romantic side of things, though it may be silly; but, after all, it's just as real as the other side. Both are *there*, and you can choose which you like to have for your own, as I said to Mr. Somerled.

By and by we came to the Cathedral. I had to confess that I'd never been in, but I didn't mention Grandma's prejudice against cathedrals. I'd never pined to see the inside as I should if the outside were tall and graceful and gray, instead of dumpy and red — an ochre-red colour which is interesting only when the sun shines on it, or when wet and sparkling with rain, in the midst of its lovely old trees. I almost gasped with joy and surprise, however, when we entered, for the interior is wonderful.

It is as if the builders had had in mind an allegory about a plain body and a glorious soul.

Who would have thought that Mr. Somerled would remember so much history of this northern country, after living, since he grew up, in America, and making fame and fortune there? Mrs. James thinks that he even talks like an American. She is a good judge, because more than half the customers of her curiosity shop are Americans, and they chat with her about all sorts of things. She reads her husband's history books, in order to give him an agreeable surprise when he comes back, and the knowledge she picks up is money in her pocket, because she can pour out floods of information upon inquiring tourists. When she's kindly told them all about the Romans in general and the Augustan Legion in particular, and the Museum, and William Rufus's Castle; about the Cathedral having been robbed of most of its nave to rebuild the city walls in 1644, and Sir Walter Scott being married to his pretty French bride there (or rather in St. Mary's Church, which was tacked on to it in those days), and so on, Americans, and even canny Scots, can't sneak out of her shop without buying something.

I loved the immense simplicity of that Norman nave, with its huge crumpled arches crushed into curving waves by the long-ago collapse of the foundations and the strain of centuries on the masonry. It was a startling contrast to go from the Norman part into the choir, all a mass of carving and decoration, with its vast east window of jewel-like thirteenth-century glass, which Mr. Somerled pronounced finer even than the windows of York and Gloucester cathedrals.

It seems that, although he hasn't been in Scotland since he left seventeen years ago (vowing never to return until something or other happened), he has been in England several times meanwhile, and travelled all over Europe. He pretended that he wasn't at all excited about crossing the border after these many years' exile, but when I cried out that I couldn't believe him so commonplace and dull, he opened his eyes wide, as surprised as if I'd boxed his ears. Mrs. James whispered that I had been rude; and when I stopped to think, I realized how unlike Mrs. West I had been. She is so gracious and complimentary to Mr. Somerled, never saying anything she thinks he might dislike. But he heard Mrs. James's whisper and said, "You must let her alone, please, my Lady Chaperon, because I have a sort of idea she is going to dig me up by the roots, and hang me up to air, and altogether do me a lot of good in the end."

They both knew much more about the Cathedral than I did, but even I knew something, because there was a book of father's which I had read. So, when they'd explained that the beautiful pink columns and the painted oak screens looked new because Cromwell's men whitewashed everything when they stabled horses in the Cathedral, and the white wasn't scraped off till comparatively lately, long after the Cathedral was a prison in 1745, I told them something they hadn't learned, or had forgotten. I was proud to have a story about Bruce coming to Carlisle to take his oath of allegiance, before the great repentance, and hating the Cathedral ever afterward.

Even the Castle doesn't look as splendid from outside as it really is. It's like an enormous box, a good deal bat-

tered and patched, containing a kingdom's treasures. But of course I didn't know about the treasures until I had been in.

I had set my heart on seeing the place, because, as I said to Mr. Somerled, I may never come back to Carlisle once I begin to live with mother and go about with her. It was a blow to be told at the entrance gate where the public enters ( and where there ought to be a moat, but isn't) that the Castle was closed for repairs. Even a grown-up man like Mr. Somerled, who has seen everything, looked disappointed; but I suppose he couldn't fight his way in against the power of England; and we should have turned ignominiously away if it hadn't been for Mrs. James. "You are surely not aware," said she in the aristocratic, long-worded way she has when she thinks of living up to the doctor (and when she isn't in earshot of Grandma) "of the distinguished identity of this gentleman. This" — with a wave of her tiny hand — "is the great portrait painter, Somerled. I will not introduce him as 'Mr.,' for he is as far above that designation as Shakespeare."

The poor wretch who had refused us was flabbergasted. "Excuse me a minute, mum!" he muttered, and darted off to return with a young officer before "the Great Somerled" had time to remonstrate. But, instead of devoting undivided attention to the celebrity who must be appeased, the officer looked at me, and we recognized each other. His face changed, and I know mine did, because my cheeks felt as if some one had pinched them. No wonder, because this had been my ideal for almost a year, before I saw the photographs in shop windows of Robert

Loraine, and I had dreamed several times that I was engaged to him, with a gorgeous diamond ring, and afterward that I was his widow in one of those sweet Marie Stuart caps. It almost seemed as if he might see the cap in my eyes, so I hurried to look down, and appear as calm as if I had never met him in the street when out walking with Heppie. Once I dropped my handkerchief, like ladies in books (only I did it on purpose, which they never do if heroines, not villainesses), and he ran after us and picked it up. That was, of course, the only time he ever spoke; but, though I have cared not only for Robert Loraine but Henry Ainley since, I should have known his voice anywhere. It was disappointing not to thrill; but to be honest, I must admit that the voice sounded meaningless now, compared with that of the Knight. Nevertheless, he was saying kind things, offering to be our guide over the Castle and show us curiosities that the "ordinary public" is not allowed to see.

Just as Mr. Somerled was thanking the officer (I soon found out that he was a lieutenant, named Donald Douglas) I heard other voices behind me. "Good gracious!" I had just time to think, "it's Mrs. West and Mr. Norman," when they came round a screen of masonry, and were upon us. As soon as they saw who we were they stopped, Mrs. West pale, with the same martyred expression, which grew sweeter and sadder every instant. Mr. Norman shook hands with us in a cordial but embarrassed way, and the man who had refused to let us enter at first would have headed the newcomers off, but Mr. Douglas stopped him.

"The Castle isn't open for visitors to-day," he said,

"but I am making an exception of Mr. Somerled's party, and as you are friends of his I shall be delighted to include you."

"You're very kind indeed; but ——" Mr. Norman had to begin answering because his sister didn't speak, and only looked, looked, looked at "her friend Mr. Somerled." Her brother awaited a cue until the pause grew embarrassing, and then the Knight sprang to the rescue of another lady in distress.

"We shall be delighted too, Mrs. West," he said.

That was probably what she wanted, for she beamed on the Soldier Man (*my* Soldier Man), and accepted his kindness. Mr. Douglas then put himself by my side; and Mrs. West annexed Mr. Somerled, or he annexed her. This left Mrs. James for Mr. Norman, and they hadn't been introduced: but they began chatting at once.

Mr. Douglas seemed quite interested when I told him he was the first soldier I'd ever known outside a book. He asked me if I thought I should like soldiers, and I said yes.

Into the heart of the fortress he led us: into the keep, square, ponderous, forbidding, cool even on a hot August day, and the best part left now of the proud old fortress.

Mrs. West had a notebook, a little purple and gold one, like a doubled-over pansy. As Mr. Douglas (laughing at himself because he was not experienced as a guide) rattled off all the information he could remember about Roman foundations — a sack by the Danes; William the Conqueror, and William Rufus, and a British fort older than the time of the Romans — she would scribble bits down hastily. But Mr. Norman took no notes, and when he saw her writing, he looked sad, almost guilty.

"Did you say the round wall the Britons built is under the keep?" she asked Mr. Douglas, who is, I feel, the kind of young man you would be calling "Donald" before you knew what you were doing. "Are there only three fortresses like this in all England? Do tell me what makes this unique?" And she looked at him so prettily that if I'd been in his place I'd have run to her like a dog and fawned at her feet. But he never stirred, and simply answered across the other people, though she is so much more intelligent than I — I, who couldn't describe properly what is a bastion.

Our guide lit a candle for the dark dungeons, awful places with grooves worn in the stone floors by the dragging feet of the prisoners, who paced rhythmically up and down in the tether of their chains. On the walls, covered with a cold sweat, as of deathless agony, we could see the staples; and there was one spot of a dreadful fascination, where Donald Douglas held his candle to show a trail of slimy moisture. Always this weeping stone had been there, he said, no one knew why; and in old days, when these dungeons bore the name of the "black hell," prisoners tortured with thirst used, animal-like, to lick the oozing patch, making many hollows round it like miniature glacier mills. After Culloden one hundred and eighty men were thrown in during one night, and only fifty were alive in the morning.

It made me feel very loyal to Scotland hearing stories like this — though I was proud of the Castle too. And I loved the tale of Willie Armstrong, Kinmont Willie, treacherously given up to Lord Scrope, for the worst dungeon of all, by troopers who in taking him violated

a border truce. His escape was a real romance; and I am glad Lord Buccleugh, who saved him, was an ancestor of Sir Walter Scott.

It was no use appealing to Lord Scrope, the Warden of the West Marches, for justice, so Lord Buccleugh resolved to make a dash, and rescue the raider, whom he loved. He got forty men (the English said two hundred, but I know better), attacked the Castle, took it by assault, and carried Willie, with fetters still dangling from his wrists, clear away across the Eden and the roaring Esk, where none dared follow. When Queen Elizabeth asked him afterward how he had dared, he said, "What is there a brave man will not dare to do?"

It was not in the first dungeons that we heard the story of Willie Armstrong, but later, in the part of the Castle which the public is not allowed to see. We got there by climbing steep stairs into what are now the soldiers' storerooms: and it's because they are storerooms that they're kept so private. Once these rooms too were prisons; and behind an immense door of oak, almost in darkness, are perfectly wonderful wall-carvings cut into the reddish sandstone by prisoners: figures of men and devils; scenes of history; initials woven into ingenious monograms, Prince Charlie's among them, and hearts interlaced. I wish I had lived in those days, and I wondered aloud if there were any girls named Barribel then. Donald Douglas said yes; it was a very ancient and well-loved Scottish name.

Stupid people in 1835 tore down most of the tower where Queen Mary was imprisoned; but they were stopped before it was all gone, so luckily there is a corner left, with a few

graceful carvings on the outer wall. And only three years ago a wonderful old table was found hidden away in a dungeon which, it is thought, must have been used as her dining-table, before she was whisked away from Carlisle to Bolton Castle in 1568. We saw the table — very dark, very rough, looking like a prehistoric animal turned to wood; and Donald Douglas said it was perhaps the oldest table alive in England to-day — as old as King Edward's, and of the shape which gave an idea later for Tudor tables. As he talked, I could almost see Queen Mary sitting by this queer piece of furniture eating a poor meal, and reading some book which might help her forget — perhaps idly fingering the splendid black pearls which Mrs. James said were bought last year in a tiny shop in Scotland, kept by descendants of a faithful maid who went with her to the scaffold. And the shopkeeper, who thought they were wax beads, lying in an old forgotten box, sold them for ten shillings!

They found in another dungeon of the Castle, hidden in a crack of the wall, a silver snuff-box with a withered finger in it, which must have been a prisoner's "fetich." But it couldn't have brought him luck; otherwise, if he'd been released, he would have taken it away with him. Probably he swung on the hanging beam that sticks out over the window of the old "condemned cell."

Next to Queen Mary's table, and perhaps the roof of the keep whence we could see away over the border into mystery-land, I liked best of all the Castle things a little deserted house in a courtyard, where Richard III lived for a while, when he was young. Few people know about it, or are taken to see it. But it alone would be enough to

make the Castle interesting if there were nothing else. Only a few empty, echoing, half-ruinous rooms there are, with a queer chimney or two to give comfort; but Richard's enemies made it a charge against him that he lived in Carlisle Castle, splendidly housed in sinful luxury. What a pity all the tales against him were not so little true as that!

## III

WE'RE in Scotland!

Cæsar could not have revelled in crossing the Rubicon as I revelled in crossing the border. The very word rings out like the sudden sound of bells, or the mysterious music that thrills one's blood in dreams.

Poor Cæsar was obliged to burn his nice boats, and think disagreeable thoughts about the great responsibility he had taken, whereas we made our crossing in a beautiful motor-car, and I had no responsibility whatever. As for disagreeable thoughts, I had a few in England, but the air of Scotland has chased them away. I see that they were silly as well as selfish thoughts. I was so wicked that I hoped Mr. Somerled would not make up his quarrel with Mrs. West. I was afraid that if he did the poor princess he had rescued would be in his way, and that he would wish her safely back in her glass retort. Now they *have* made up, yet somehow I don't feel in the way. He is so kind, and — yes, I must admit it — Mrs. West is so tactful.

It seems that while Mr. Douglas and I were walking and talking together in Carlisle Castle she apologized to Mr. Somerled. And outside the entrance gates, when Mr. Douglas had shaken hands, hoping to "run across us" when he gets leave for Edinburgh, Mrs. West walked up to me. "I've begged Mr. Somerled's pardon," she said,

with her pretty smile which never changes, "and he has forgiven me, so you mustn't go on thinking me an ill-natured, bad-tempered person, please; I'm not really. Only we writing people have 'temperaments,' just as artists have — Mr. Somerled himself, for instance. My brother scolded me, and I deserved it. He is *so* interested in you and your talent for writing, and wants to be your friend. You won't blame him for my fault, will you?"

Of course I said no, and she held out her hand. When I'd put mine into it, she pressed it gently, and before letting it go asked in a lower voice if Mr. Somerled had told me why they quarrelled.

I shook my head emphatically as I answered that he hadn't said a word, and she looked suddenly much happier. "That is *like* him!" she exclaimed — if one can exclaim in a whisper. "Well, we must forget what's passed, and think of the future. Basil and I have hired a car now, and will travel in it; but that will be all the better for our novel, as I've just been telling Mr. Somerled, for we shan't have anything to distract our minds from the scenery and our notebooks. I've begged him to feel *no* regrets: for now we're friends again, and we shall meet constantly, no doubt, without any embarrassment, but a great deal of pleasure. As for you, dear little girl, you mustn't feel that the cloud we've passed through need shadow you. It had to do only with us grown-ups. You have but to 'play dolls' and be happy, until you're safely tied up in your mother's apron-strings. Not that she's likely to have any!" And Mrs. West laughed, showing her white teeth that are almost like a child's.

"Thank you," I said. "I mean to be happy — *very* happy!"

She looked over her shoulder at Mr. Norman, as if giving him a signal, and he came and talked to me. He said that he had hardly slept all night, because he was so miserable over what had happened, for every one's sake, but especially for his own, as he felt that a beautiful hope had been snatched away from him. "It was the hope of a friendship with you," he added. "But now we'll take it up just where it fell down, won't we, finding that it isn't broken after all?"

While we were shaking hands I heard Mrs. West tell Mr. Douglas that I was the daughter of Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald, and he seemed immensely astonished, just as Mr. Somerled had, and Mrs. West and Mr. Norman.

I wonder why every one is so surprised? Can it be that actresses do not often have children?

We bade each other good-bye, all of us, for Mrs. West and Mr. Norman are going to see some places that apparently Mr. Somerled doesn't care about; and it isn't quite certain when we shall meet again. "We shall be like bad pennies, always turning up," Mr. Norman said; and Mrs. West added quickly to Mr. Somerled, "But if we do, you mustn't feel that we're tracking you down. The exigencies of authorship force us to be conscientious sightseers."

As she spoke, she gave her brother a look. I don't know what it meant, but his face had a sad, tired expression, as if there had been some dispute or argument between him and his sister, and he was sick of it. I don't

feel, somehow, that he's in a good mood for their story-writing together just now, and I'm sorry for him. I believe he would rather be motoring with us than with her. Perhaps they have had a difference of opinion about the plot of their book, for he told me in the summer-house that he'd suddenly got a new idea for a motor romance, and had lost interest in the old one.

When we were ready to start away from Carlisle Castle, Mr. Somerled condemned Vedder to sit at his feet; but the man seemed to take this quite for granted, and not to mind in the least. "Would one of you care to sit beside me?" he asked with so wooden an expression that it was impossible to guess whether he would prefer Mrs. James or me to say yes. Selfishly, I wanted him to prefer me, and because he didn't seem to mind, I pretended not to hear, but went on talking to Mr. Douglas as if he were the most important person in the world. Suddenly I felt a kind of power over him, as if I were a grown-up woman in a book, and could make men take an interest in me. Still, I could quite well hear Mrs. James answer that she was too great a coward for the front seat, but she was sure I would love it. Mr. Somerled turned to me then, without speaking, as if to wait for me to answer, and I couldn't help thinking, by the look in his eyes, that he *had* wanted me, in spite of the wooden expression. So I stopped in the midst of a word to Mr. Douglas, and said, as meekly as a trained dove, that I should like to sit in front.

"What a pity you haven't got a congenial, romantic companion in the car, like that lad," said the Knight, rather sharply, "instead of a war-worn veteran of over thirty."

"Oh, I'd rather have you, because I feel already as if I'd known you always," I explained. "And do you know, it didn't seem to me there was anything romantic about Mr. Douglas, except his name."

"In that case, you are a little flirt," said he, driving fast. But when I looked at him in the greatest surprise, he seemed sorry. "I take that back," he said. "I really don't believe you know yet what the word means, or what you've done to earn it. Are you contented with me as a companion, or would you rather have Douglas, or Norman? I should really like to know, out of sheer curiosity, so you needn't mind telling the truth, for in any case you won't hurt my feelings."

"Why, but you are my Knight!" I said. And he asked no more questions then about personal matters. We talked of the scenery, or he let me talk, and said that it didn't disturb him in driving. He seemed quite to take an interest in what I had to say, as if I had been an intelligent person like Mrs. West. He didn't laugh at the high-flown ideas I've collected about history, and frontiers between countries, but said that my enthusiasms were contagious.

"I'd given up all hope of a thrill at crossing the border," he said. "I thought it was too late. 'What's long sought often comes when unsought,' you know — or rather, you don't know yet, and I hope you never will. You are making me wonder if, after all, instead of putting off my homecoming too long, I haven't chosen just the right moment."

I was glad to hear this, though I don't know even now how I managed to give him that idea, unless by boiling with inward joy, and always insisting that the world's not

old, but young — a wonderful place, where every flower and bird and every ray of sunlight is worth being born to see.

I asked him not to tell me when we came to the border, because I hoped to know it by instinct; and, as it turned out, I *did* know. But I think any one with eyes must have known.

Out from old Caer Luel, our road had crossed the Eden where Willie Armstrong escaped, and ran on white and smooth toward the Solway, whose sands glistened golden in the sun. The tide, which I'd read of as racing like a horse at gallop, was busy somewhere else, and the river lay untroubled, a broad, blue ribbon in the sandy plain where Prince Charlie's men and horses once struggled and drowned.

Now I knew we must be in the Debatable Lands, the hunting-ground of the border raiders, beautiful wild land, full of the sound of rivers, voices of the Teviot and the Eden, the Ettrick and the Yarrow, singing together and mingling with the voices of poets who loved them. Through the country of dead Knights of the Road my live Knight of To-day drove slowly, thinking maybe of dim centuries before history began, when the Picts and Gaels I have read of fought together among the billowy mountains; or of the Romans building Hadrian's wall against the "little dark men"; or of the many heroes, Scottish and English, who had drenched the heather with their blood since then; or perhaps of himself, and the days of his boyhood when he said good-bye to bonny Scotland and went to try his fortune in the New World. Whatever his thoughts may have been, they made his face at first sad, then hard; I fancied that it was of himself as a boy he

thought, and of his father and mother, whom he will not see when he goes home; so to bring him out of his brown study I began to tell him a story Mrs. Muir had told me about the border. It was the tale of the last Picts, and the secret of the heather ale. All, all the mysterious little dark people had been swept away in a great massacre by the Scots after centuries of fighting with the Romans; and only a father and son were left alive. "Give me thy Pictish secret of brewing heather ale," said the King of the Scots, when the pair were brought before him, "and I may perhaps spare thee and thy son."

Then the dark Pict shut his eyes for a moment, and thought what to do. He thought that the King would kill him and his son when he had their secret; and he thought of the mead which had the power of wafting the Picts to the Land of Pleasant Dreams.

From the bonny bells of heather,
They brewed a drink langsyne,
Was sweeter far than honey,
Was stronger far than wine.
They brewed it and they drank it,
And lay in blessed swound
For days and days together,
In their dwellings underground.

When he had thought with his eyes shut, the Pict said that he could not tell the secret while his son lived, because of the shame he would feel that his own flesh and blood should know him a traitor. He said this because he believed they would kill the boy quickly without torture; and the old man was right, for they bound his son hand and foot, and flung him out to sea. "Now tell us the

secret," they said. But the Pict only laughed and answered, "Now I will not tell, because there is nothing more you can do to hurt me." So they killed him quickly too, in their rage, and the secret of the heather ale died with him.

Though he liked the story, the obstinate man argued that the last of the Picts were not really killed in this or any other way; that they had slowly died out as a race, and had married with the Scots, leaving a strain of their blood in the land to this day. "You know," he said, "that Somerled of the Isles married a Pictish princess, and so there's Pictish blood in the veins of the MacDonalds, in your veins and in mine, though I'm of cottage birth, and you are of the castle."

"I know that story of Somerled," I answered, "and how, hero though he was, he got his princess by a fraud. It makes him seem more human."

"I wonder if his princess thought so?" said Somerled the Second.

"Why, of course she did," I answered him as if I were in her confidence.

When I was in Carlisle, and proud of my English birth, I used to like reading about the great battle of the Solway Moss, where two hundred English horsemen killed or took prisoners more than a thousand Scots they'd chased into the bog; but now I've forgotten everything except that I'm a Scottish lass; and though I'm of the Highlands, and these were Lowland men, I don't, as I did, love to dwell upon the raid of the Solway Moss. Still, I could not get it out of my head, and while I pictured it, as I have to do most things, whether I wish or no, I saw a bridge — a fine

stone bridge, flung like the span of a petrified rainbow across a small stream.

"That must be the Sark!" I gasped. "And we've come — we've come to the border!"

"Good lass, to divine it!" said he. And how I liked his calling me a good lass — it was better than princess!

We crossed the bridge slowly, lingering with half the car in England, half in Scotland; then suddenly we sprang on gayly, with a rush ahead, past the famous toll-house, which looked exactly like all its pictures.

"Ho for Scotland — our ain countree!" I cried; and though he did not turn to me, I saw his profile looking flushed and glad.

"Now you should take back your own name of MacDonald again, from this very minute of crossing the border," I said, when I had drawn in my first long breath of Scotland. "Somerled's a grand name, yet it was only the foundation of MacDonald. But I forgot! You've made your fame and money as Somerled. Which do you love more — your Scottish blood or your American fame and fortune?"

"Blood is stronger than water, and fame is running water," he said. "As for the money, I've cared too much for it — at least for the power it gave me. I didn't make the most of it with my pictures, and greed led me to love it better than my true work. That's why I lost the way to fairyland, little Princess. I buried myself under the 'shields and bracelets,' and I buried my talents, such as they were. For a while Somerled tried to deserve the great name he had chosen — but only for a little while. When by accident he grew rich, he began to wallow. Not a

picture worthy of his boyish ambition has he painted for five years. What he has done have been 'potboilers.' He forgot that he was an artist, and wanted only to be a millionaire. Disgusting! Now that I've told you this, do you — a MacDonald — bid me to take the name again at the border, where, as a boy, I laid it down — long ago, with high hopes and vows romantic enough to please even you?"

"Yes," I said, "I, a MacDonald, bid you to take up the name, and with it all the old hopes and the old ambitions, as you come back into your own land. Forget your silly money, and remember only that you're an artist in a lovely motor-car. Won't *that* make you happy — and a boy again?"

"Something is making me happy — and a boy again," he echoed.

## IV

ANY dull body who says that the minute you're over the border everything is not changed, can have no eyes — nor nose, because even the smell is different. It is — I'm sure it is — the adorable smell of peat. I have never yet smelt peat, but this is like my dreams.

Oh, how beautiful everything was as we crossed the span of the stone rainbow! A fresh wind had sprung up, and out of the brilliant sunshine a shower was spurting, like diamonds set in gold. I saw the dazzling sight with eyes full of rain and curls.

"Here we'll find the rainbow key — on *this* side the bridge, in the keeping of the Border Saints or Wizards," said I; for the hills and lowlands that rolled away to the making of Scotland had a colour as if stained with the fadeless, dried rainbows of centuries. Mingled with peat was the tea-rose scent of summer rain and of running water, which is as the fragrance of fresh-cut melons. Clouds like huge white brooms swept the sky, and surging suddenly round us was a wave of sheep, charming, reserved, Scottish sheep with ears of a different shape from the English kind, like those of exaggerated rabbits. They looked at us with horizontal eyes of pale brass cut across with narrow slits of jet, and their thick wool, wet with rain, sparkled as if encrusted with diamond dust. With them

was a collie, much collie-er than English collies, with a pawky Scottish smile. Not that I know what pawky means, but it seems a word I ought to use at once, now we are on Scottish soil.

Nobody need tell me that the first houses of Scotland have any resemblance to the last houses of England. Maybe the country hasn't had time to change much, just in crossing the bridge. I won't argue about that. But the houses are as different from English houses as Scotsmen are from Englishmen. Could you ever mistake a Scot for an un-Scot? No! Our wide-apart eyes and our dreamy yet practical expression, our high cheekbones, our sensitive, clear-cut nostrils, and the something mysterious in our gaze which no one can explain or understand, not even ourselves, is all our own. I have just found this out since crossing the border. And am I not a MacDonald of Dhrum?

I can't say that the first Scots I met — men, women, or children — looked like descendants of the robber hordes who used to make the Borderland their home; yet I paid them the compliment to believe they were such. And you never would dream that the great-great-grandchildren of raiders could have built for themselves the mild, solid, self-respecting houses these people have dotted along the road where King Arthur passed, and where some of the most romantic battles of history have been fought. But so it is. And there the houses are. The people have found a kind of stone to build them with, which looks like pressed roses; and there are door-stones and even gate-stones of such an incredible cleanness, that some women must devote their whole lives to their service, as nuns do to prayer.

Soon we came to the village and the post-office of Gretna Green, bristling with picture post cards. There was the expected group of whitewashed, one-story houses plastered with exciting notices: "Old Priests' Relics," "Marriage Registers Kept," and delightful things like that. So far, the scene was just what I'd imagined; but there was one feature in the picture which made me feel I must be dreaming, it was so surprising and extraordinary.

In front of the Blacksmith's Shop stood the quaintest vehicle out of a museum. It was an antique chaise such as no one in the last five generations can have seen except in an illustrated book, or an old coloured print. Two handsome gray horses were harnessed to it, looking quite embarrassed, as if they hated being made conspicuous, and hoped that they might not be recognized by their smart acquaintances. As we came gliding past, they turned away their faces, lest our motor — christened by me Gray Dragon — should regard them with contempt. By the horses' heads stood a gorgeous, grinning man, dressed in livery such as postilions may have worn a hundred years ago. Talking to him was a blacksmith of the same remote epoch, with knee-breeches showing under a leather apron, a great hammer in his hand, and on his head a high, broad-brimmed beaver hat balanced on a white wig. Not far off were two men in modern clothes; and they were placing in position some kind of a photographic camera.

When they saw that we meant to stop at the Blacksmith's Shop, they brightened up, and seemed as much interested as if they had never before seen an automobile.

"They're going to take photographs of a Gretna Green wedding of ancient times, for a biograph show, evidently,"

said Sir Somerled MacDonald, and quickly explained to the late prisoner of the glass retort the nature of a biograph. "Rather a good idea that! Apparently they're waiting for their chief characters, the bride and groom."

He was helping Mrs. James to get down from the car, and I had already jumped out, for, of course, we wanted to visit the old house, and see everything there was to see, in the place where Shelley (maybe!) and hundreds of other famous people have been married. But before going in, we lingered to stare at the chaise, which was rather like an immense bathtub, the kind we used at Hillard House, where Grandma would have no such new-fangled innovation as a bathroom. As we stood there, one of the men with the camera came up, hovered undecidedly, and then said, with a cough to draw attention to himself: "Excuse me, sir, but will you pardon the liberty of my asking if you and the young lady will oblige us with a great favour?"

Sir Somerled frowned slightly, with his millionaire manner, which is not so nice as the other. "What is the favour?" he inquired.

"Why, sir," the man explained, "we're in a bit of a hole. You can see we're here to reconstruct a runaway wedding for a cinema show. We represent the North British Biograph Company, and we've been to a lot of trouble and expense to get our props together. Pretty soon the father's coach will be along, and we've got all we want except the two principal figures. The bride and groom we engaged have failed to turn up. We can't make out what's happened, but they ain't here, and we've searched the neighbourhood without finding anything we can do with in their place. The light's just right now, after the

flurry o' rain, but by the look o' the sky it won't last; and altogether it seems as if we'd have our trouble for our pains unless you and the young lady'd consent to help us out. If you'll allow me to say so, sir, in costume you'd be the Ideal Thing."

For an instant Sir S. looked as haughty as a dethroned king. Then the funny side struck him, and he laughed. "You flatter us," he said; "but I'm sorry we can't do what you ask. Perhaps your people will turn up, after all."

The poor man looked bitterly disappointed, almost as if he would cry, and so did the other, who had been listening with enormously large red ears like handles on a terra-cotta urn. Both men were wet with the rain, which had fallen sharply and only just stopped as if to welcome us over the border. The one who had spoken turned sadly away, without venturing to urge his point (Sir S. isn't the sort of person strange men would take liberties with), but in retreating he threw one agonized look at me. I couldn't resist it.

"Oh, *do* let's stand for the bride and groom!" I pleaded. And foreseeing a battle the photographer hastily retired into the background to let us fight it out. "It would be such fun. I should love it. You know, I've always vowed to be married at Gretna Green, if at all. And this would be next best to the real thing."

I gazed up at Sir S. as enticingly as I knew how, and there was a look in his eyes that frightened me a little. I was afraid I had made him angry; yet it wasn't a look of crossness. I could not tell what it meant, but his voice in answering sounded kind. As usual, when he has been

particularly grave, he smiled that nice smile which begins in his eyes and suddenly lights up his face.

"You'd better wait for the 'real thing' and the real man," said he. "Be patient for a few years. You've plenty of time."

"I may *never* get another such good chance," I mourned. "You *are* unkind! It would amuse me so much, and it wouldn't hurt you."

"Do you think that's why I say no?" he asked. "You think I'm afraid?"

"Yes, I do," I insisted. "You're too proud to do what will make you look silly — because you're the great Somerled."

"By Jove!" he said, and his face flushed up. "If you say much more I will do it — and hang everything!"

"I *do* say much more!" I cried. "*Much* more — and hang everything."

"Very well, then," said he. "Your blood be on your own head."

"My head's red enough already!" I giggled. "Oh, what fun! You are good, after all."

"*Am* I good, Mrs. James, or am I bad?" he asked, turning for the first time to her, as if he were half inclined to change his mind. But she only smiled. "I can't see that there's any real harm," said she. "It does seem a pity that these poor people should have come all this way and spent all this money for nothing, don't you think so?"

"I wasn't thinking of them. I was thinking of Miss MacDonald."

"I'm thinking of her too," answered Mrs. James, as

seriously as if she were deciding something important. "If you don't mind on your *own* account, why ——"

He laughed. "Oh, as to *that!* —— Well, come along, Miss MacDonald ——"

"Barrie," I reminded him.

"Barrie! On with our wedding toggery, and let's be quick, if we don't want an audience."

He called the photographer rather sharply, and put him out of his suspense. "You must thank the ladies' kind hearts," he said. "They can't bear to have your scheme end in smoke. Tell us what you want us to do, and we'll do it — anything in reason. But you mustn't expect the bride to show her face. She must keep it turned aside."

"That'll be all right," said the man, "though, of course, we should have preferred —— But after your great kindness we mustn't ask too much ——"

"Certainly you must not," Sir S. caught him up. And then the other photographer, who had darted across the road to the chaise on hearing the good news, opened a bundle that lay on the seat, and hauled out the contents.

Mrs. James began to be interested in the game, and the people who lived in the houses were delighted that they were not to lose their hoped-for excitement. Luckily, as it was lunching-time for most travellers, the road was empty, and it seemed likely that we might finish our play without spectators. The only moving things in sight at the moment, except our own group, were one cat, two dogs, and a vehicle even more quaint than the chaise in front of the Blacksmith's Shop. It was a coach like Cinderella's, though not so pumpkiny. It was drawn by two nice

brown horses who might have begun life as rats. On one rode a postilion, and out of a window leaned an old man in a tall hat and a brown coat with brass buttons and a high velvet collar and ruffles at the wrist. His hair was powdered, and he wore a white stock wound round his throat. If we had met him on the road, without an explanation, we should have thought that we had gone mad, or had seen a ghost; but now we knew him for the bride's angry parent pursuing her relentlessly with a coach and pair. It did sound odd to hear this fine old English aristocrat bawl out in a common voice, "Ain't ye ready yet — what?"

One of the photographers ran along the road and explained and gesticulated. The coach stopped at a distance. I flew into the Blacksmith's Shop to put on my wedding things, and Sir S. disappeared next door with clothes under one arm and a hat under the other. I should think no bride and bridegroom ever dressed in such a scramble.

Mrs. James, dimpling and fussing, hustled me into a green brocade gown which smelt of moth powder, and was so big that it went on easily over my frock. Then came a purple silk cloak with wide flowing sleeves and a romantic hood. One of the photograph men stood by to direct us; and when Mrs. James was putting the hood over my head, he stopped her. "Madam, if I might ask the young lady to take the pins out of her hair," he begged, quite red with eagerness, "we shall get a great dramatic effect if it tumbles down with the pulling back of the hood, just as her lover helps her out of the chaise."

Her lover indeed! Sir S. would have glowered; but I

laughed, and out came the hairpins, for the good of the game. I have always had to "make believe" all alone, so it was extra fun having such a grand playfellow as Sir Somerled — whether he liked it or not. And I determined that I would *make* him like it! I wanted him to play properly, and not be stiff and disagreeable and grown up. He was ready before I was, and waiting; for it took a little while stuffing all my hair safely into the hood, and practising how to let it fall at the right moment. I hadn't quite realized that my playmate was really handsome, in his dark, proud way, till I saw him in a wavy brown wig with a ribbon-tied queue, a broad-brimmed hat that sat dashingly on one side, shadowing his face; a blue overcoat with a cape, and high boots drawn up to his knees. He looked so splendid and so young that suddenly my heart beat as if I were really and truly in love.

"If you should look at yourself in the glass," I said, feeling shy, yet wishing him to know that he was nice, "you'd never say again that you've outgrown romance. No one would suspect you of being anything so dull as a millionaire. You ought to paint your own portrait in that costume."

"Thanks," said he, "I'd rather do you in yours." But I think he was pleased.

The photographer and the postilion both came forward to help, but Sir Somerled wouldn't let his bride be touched by them. He handed me into the chaise himself, and sat down by my side. Off trotted our horses to a little distance, and turned round again. The show was ready to begin.

Meanwhile, the others had been busy. They'd placed

an anvil, real or imitation, on the green in front of the house, for the pictures were all to be taken out of doors. The blacksmith had begun to hammer away at a horseshoe, and that was our signal to dash up to the door. He stopped hammering, pushed back his hat, and greeted us in pantomime. Sir Somerled, playing his part well since it must be played, swung me out of the chaise with an arm round my waist. Down fell my hood and my hair, blowing round his face and hiding mine. He kissed my hand as the blacksmith ran off into the house to get his book; and by this time I was almost as wildly excited as if we had eloped. The camera was grinding out photographs of everything that happened, no doubt, but just then I forgot all about it, or that any one was looking at us. We clasped hands over the anvil, Sir Somerled and I. As the blacksmith made the motions of marrying us in haste, I looked across at my playfellow, and at the same instant my playfellow looked across at me. I wanted him to smile, and he would not! "Please *pretend* you're delighted to marry me," I mumbled. "Can't you see by my face how glad I am to get *you?*"

"So should I be to get you, if I were the fairy prince," said he, in so kind a voice it was a pity the biograph couldn't snap it. I squeezed his hand to thank him for playing up to me, and he squeezed mine to show that he understood. I felt suddenly that we were the best and truest of friends. Even meeting my mother can't make up for losing him out of my life, though he has been in it such a short time, and strayed in only by accident.

While we stood hand in hand, along came the red coach. Out leaped the father, as the postilion drew his horses up,

and the bride sought refuge in the bridegroom's arms. It did seem real, and exciting!

"Too late! We're married," said I. But even that was not the end of the play. The father had to threaten the bridegroom with his pistol, and the bride had to throw herself between the two men. I can see now what fun actresses have. I was quite sorry when it was all over and the biograph men were packing up to go.

"We don't know how to thank you enough, miss," said the one who appeared to be the leader, "for persuading the gentleman. If you'll give us your address we'll send you reduced copies of the series of pictures."

An address! I didn't know what to answer, for at present I possess no such thing, though I thought it would sound queer to say so. I looked for Sir Somerled, but he had walked away down the road to our motor, which was hiding from the camera. His back was turned to me, but I could see that his suit-case had been taken down from its place, and he was putting something in it.

"I don't know whether I ought to mention this, miss," said the biograph man, "but you might be interested to know that the gentleman has bought the costume you wore in the wedding-scene, and paid a good price for it. That's what he's packing away now, I presume."

"Oh! And did he buy his own costume, too?" I asked.

"No, miss, only yours. I thought you might like to know."

I did like to know. And I supposed that Sir S. would tell me all about it when he came back, explaining that he'd got the things for a model to wear in some picture; but not a word did he say — which puzzled me so much

that all the sight-seeing inside the Blacksmith's Shop could not take my mind off the mystery.

I sat in one of the marriage chairs, and looked at the pictures of the old priests, and read about the many famous runaway couples since 1754, beginning with Penelope Smith, the prettiest girl of Exeter, who married Prince Charles of Bourbon, brother to the King of Naples. But all the time I was thinking hard about myself and Mr. Somerled, and wondering why he had secretly bought the wedding-dress.

The guardian of the house made us write our names in the visitors' book, which Mrs. James thought exactly like signing the register at a proper marrying. And I said, "If nobody ever asks me to be his real wife, I shan't be as badly off as other old maids, because, whatever happens, I *have* had my wedding — a wedding at Gretna Green!"

## V

WE HAD a bridal sort of luncheon in the car, which was shunted off the highway into a green shadowed road abandoned to summer dreams. Mrs. James and I were like the flowers of the field, and had given no thought to food, or where or how we were to get it. We supposed vaguely that when we grew hungry we should stop at some inn and eat; but Sir Somerled had a surprise in the shape of an American invention called a refrigerator basket, nickel-lined, with an ice compartment walled in with asbestos or something scientific. He said that it had been a present, and he'd promised to bring it with him on this Scottish trip, which it appears he was ordered to take as a rest cure. On the lid of the basket, in a conspicuous place, is a silver plate, saying, in beautiful old English letters, "To Ian Somerled, from his grateful model," and underneath a monogram "M. M." in the raised heart of an elaborate marguerite. As we ate ice-cold chicken, salad, and chilled wild strawberries of the north, Mrs. James began with a gay perkiness to tease Sir S. about the "grateful model," whose name must surely be Marguerite; but I put a stop to that. The hour after a wedding at Gretna Green is no time for talk of any woman-thing except the bride; and as I may perhaps never be anybody's real bride, I insisted on my rights. This carrying on of the Gretna Green game rather scan-

dalized good Mrs. James, but when she scolded me gently for my "childishness," Sir S. said, "Do let her be a child as long as she can. It would be well for every one of us if we kept something of our childhood all our lives. Just now I'm finding childhood gloriously contagious. I don't know how many years I've thrown off in two days' time, since this child princess commanded me to play with her."

This nipped the scolding in its bud (not that I minded it), but I'm sure dear Mrs. James still thought my bride-game had been played too long, and she switched the conversation to the real romances of Gretna Green — so breathlessly thrilling, some of them, that I was ashamed to hark back to the subject of ourselves. Not that Sir S. wouldn't make a hero for my romance. I feel that under his quiet, sometimes tired manner, there's a hidden fire, and I want to find out what he is really like, if I can. The study of such a man will be more interesting and even more mysterious than peeping through the keyhole of the garret door, into what I used to call "fairyland." Already that seems long ago.

No one would guess, who had only seen Mrs. James with Grandma, how much the little woman knows, or how nicely she can talk, and I blurted this thought out, before I stopped to reflect that it might sound rude. An hour passed like five minutes in listening to her story of the Lord Chancellor's wedding at Gretna, and Lord Westmorland's shooting of Banker Child's horse, to save his young bride from capture by her father; the tale of Robert Burns almost inveigled into marriage by a pretty girl he met on the road; and best of all the exciting history of the brave lass of Langholm, who ran through brooks and bushes to

snatch her lover at the last minute from a rival he was marrying in the Blacksmith's Shop. This last anecdote had been "the doctor's" favourite. One chapter of his history was devoted entirely to the Old Glasgow Road. In it he gave three whole pages to the young man's bet and the two lassies who were ready to help him win it. "The doctor was romantic at heart," explained Mrs. James, sighing, and pausing with an ice-cold chocolate éclair in her hand. "All romance appealed to his imagination, and in his notes he gave much space to Gretna Green, from the day of Paisley, the first priest, up to the present time, when couples marry in the Blacksmith's Shop in fun and not in fear. But," she went on, anxious to impress the great Somerled, "Doctor James gave space in plenty to the serious history of the Road: the Raider episodes; the journey of Queen Mary; the march of Prince Charlie's Highlanders in charge of Cumberland's soldiers, on their way to prison at Carlisle; the tramping of many penniless Scottish geniuses seeking their fortune in London town; the visits of famous men like Scott and Dickens, and Edward Irving the preacher, who made his bride get down from her carriage on the bridge, and walk on foot into her adopted country, England."

Mrs. James always grows excited when she talks about the doctor and his unfinished history of Scotland; and though she'd known Sir S. only a day and a half, she was mesmerized into telling him secrets Grandma couldn't have dragged from her with wild horses. She even showed him Doctor James's photograph, which, in a shut-up velvet case, she had put into the handbag Sir S. gave her. "Do *you*, an artist, with your great knowledge of human

faces and the souls behind them, believe a man with those eyes and that forehead would take his own life to escape scandal?" she appealed to him. "Wouldn't it be more natural to disappear, trusting to his wife's faith, until he had made a new career somewhere and won back the honour of his name?"

Very gravely Sir S. examined the photograph, which she had painted in water colours, rather faded now; and I looked at it, though I've seen it before. Apparently he was sincerely interested in her story, and in the picture. But then he seems interested always, in a quiet way, in what people tell him, never interrupting or talking of himself and his affairs, as Grandma does if any one comes to see her. "You are right, Mrs. James," he said. "That man is a dreamer, but not a coward. He might do strange things, but never a contemptible one."

"Oh, what a judge of character!" she breathed ecstatically. "And how sympathetic! It's wonderful, in the busy, flattered life you must have led for many years, how you've kept your kind heart and generous thought for others. But it's your artistic temperament!"

The great Somerled laughed and looked embarrassed. "My enemies say that my 'artistic temperament' has been swamped long ago by my love of money-making and getting difficult things to turn my way. I think the enemies are probably right; but you and this princess would dig up any decent qualities a man might have left, no matter how deep they were buried under rubbish."

"How do we dig them up?" I wanted to know.

"By being children — both of you — in your different ways."

Then he gave Mrs. James back the faded photograph, with a few more compliments on the doctor's eyes and the shape of his forehead. It was time to be starting on, but the grateful dear would not accept his offer of help in clearing up. She sent me away with him down the road to gather a bunch of bluebells, azure as a handful of sky, to put into our hanging vase — my first Scotch bluebells. And as soon as we were well away, he began asking questions about Doctor James, which showed that he really cared. What was his first name? How old was he when he disappeared? And how long ago was that?

"His Christian name was Richard," said I. "It was seventeen years ago that he disappeared — or died. And he must have been twenty-nine then, because Heppie says he was too young for Mrs. James — only a year older than she — which would make him forty-six now."

"You mustn't give her away like that," Sir Somerled reproached me. "I should have guessed her seven or eight years younger."

"Ah, that's the massage and the skin food and neck exercises," said I, wisely. "She *will* be pleased when I tell her what a success you think they are."

"She'll be much more pleased if you don't tell her you've mentioned them, and I strongly advise you not to. Do you happen to know whether Doctor James had a scar on the left temple?"

"Yes," I eagerly answered. "She's told me about it. That's why he turned the right side of his face to be photographed. But why? Did you ever come to Carlisle and see him before you sailed for America as a boy?"

"I came to Carlisle. I may have seen him," Sir S.

replied. "But say nothing to Mrs. James about this conversation of ours. Some time, perhaps, I may tell you why. If not, it's not worth remembering. And now, I see she's got everything ready, and is waiting for us. So is Vedder. The car's had a good drink of petrol, and we can be off — for a sight of Carlyle's country. Will that bore you?" He looked at me almost anxiously, as if something depended on my answer.

"Bore me? Oh, no: I shall love to go there," I assured him.

"Why? What do you know of Carlyle?"

"Not much," I had to confess, "But there were three books of his my father had, which I've read. And there's a picture of him still in the library."

"Which books? What picture?"

"'The French Revolution,' and 'Hero Worship,' and 'Sartor Resartus.' It was that last one I read first. I took it off the shelf because it had such a queer name. I wanted to find out what it meant. Don't you always desperately want to find out what everything means? I do. But I suppose you know everything by now. Well, I began to read without being so very much interested. Then, suddenly, my mind seemed to wake up. It was a wonderful feeling, just as if I stood near to a man who was playing marvellous and startling music on the grandest organ ever made. And the man who played could sing too. He sang in a voice sometimes harsh and sometimes sweet. It seemed to me as I read the book that it was humorous and sad, tender and stern at the same time. And till the very end I was carried along on the wave of that organ music, which had in it always a thrill of the divine. I never found

any other book in the library that made me feel exactly like that, except Shakespeare — and Grandma had all the Shakespeare volumes carted off to the garret after she came in one day when I was eleven, and found me reading 'Macbeth.' As for the picture of Carlyle, it shows him sitting in a chair, with a look on his face of a sad man alone in a gray world."

"Whistler's portrait! You shall have all Carlyle's works and Shakespeare's for your own. I'll give them to you," said Sir Somerled, looking at me with an interested look, as if suddenly he liked me better than he had before.

"Oh, you *are* good, and I should love to have them," I said. "But now there'll be my mother I shall have to ask permission of for everything. I must do just what she wants me to do, for I shall die if she doesn't love me."

"Yes. I'd forgotten," said he.

"I hadn't, for a minute," I answered. "But I suppose, as mother is a great actress, she loves Shakespeare and has all his works; and perhaps she has Carlyle, too, in her library."

"Perhaps," he echoed.

"Don't you like her?" I asked. "You always look odd, and speak in a short, snappy way when I talk of my mother."

"I like and admire her immensely," he answered, in that remote tone which tries to frighten me, and does almost — but not quite. "All the same, I don't think you'll find Carlyle in her library, so you'll have to let me give him to you. But meanwhile, you shall learn to understand him better by seeing the little village where he was born, and the house his father the stonemason built."

So we started off in the car, going back to the highway and along a road which perhaps would not have seemed extraordinary if it hadn't been made surpassingly beautiful by men who lit the path of history with a shining light. I had a gay, irresponsible feeling, sitting beside Sir S. on the springy front seat of the luxurious motor-car, as if I were a neat little parcel clearly addressed to my destination, and going there safely by registered post. By this time even Mrs. James had ceased to "bite her heart" when she saw another motor dashing toward us, or a man sauntering across the road and filling the whole horizon. The car is so singularly intelligent that you feel it is a friend, too kind-hearted and chivalrous a creature to let anything bad happen. Of course, about every ten minutes something *almost* happens, but that is invariably the fault of other people's cars. You dash up to the mouth of a cross-road which you couldn't possibly have seen, because it is subtly disguised as a clump of trees or a flowery knoll; and you discover its true identity only because another motor — a blundering brute of a motor — bursts out at fifty miles an hour in front of your nose. If you'd reached that point an instant later, your own virtuous automobile and the wretch that isn't yours would certainly have telescoped, and you'd have been sitting in the nearest tree with your head in your lap. But already I begin to notice that you may pretty well count on reaching the danger point (produced by alien autos) at precisely the right instant, never the wrong one, and this gives you a beautiful confidence in your luck and your driver: although the real secret must lie in the acuteness of your guardian angel or patron saint. Vedder, who when young

was a champion boxer, is very superstitious, and Mr. Somerled allows him a large gold medal of St. Christopher on the dashboard. St. Christopher, it seems, has undertaken the spiritual care of motor-cars, and as by this time he has millions under his guidance, his plans for keeping them out of each other's way must be as complicated as the traffic arrangements of a railway superintendent. When I contrasted the angelic behaviour of our car with the appalling perversity of other people's, Sir S. burst out laughing, and said that evidently I was born with the motor instinct: that he'd seen women who took days or weeks learning these great truths, whereas I came by them naturally. "It's remarkable what a lot of valuable knowledge can be picked up by an enterprising princess in a glass retort, when the dragon isn't looking!" said he.

"Princesses in glass retorts are perhaps forced to learn lessons tabooed by dragons," I replied to this; "so if I know things or have thought things that every other girl doesn't think or know, it's because they were forbidden fruit. They were my only fun."

"They've made you a splendid little 'pal,' if you know what that means," said he. "I'm not sure the glass-retort system hasn't some advantages for the bringing up of women. The proverb is that truth lies at the bottom of a well. I begin to think it may be looked for in glass retorts in the land of dragons."

"You mean that I'm truthful?" I asked.

"Yes. I'm inclined to believe, up to date, that you've remained as transparent as the glass of your late prison."

"What makes you think so?" I wanted to know.

"Observation — partly. And the way you talk to me."

"What way?"

"Well — that's a knotty question. I can hardly explain, but ——"

"I wonder," I began to think out aloud, "whether you mean that I say what comes into my mind without being afraid you mayn't like it?"

"Er — um — perhaps that covers a good deal of the ground. But what put the idea into your head? Why should you be afraid of me?"

"I'm not. Only — I've thought that it would be more respectful if I were. You are so celebrated, you see. That's the first thing I heard about you — I mean, about your being such a famous artist. I heard you were rich too, but of course that didn't interest me so much."

"No? That proves the benefit of the glass-retort system."

"Why — how, please?"

"Because princesses who haven't been bottled up in them, but have lived in the lap of luxury — and in the laps of luxurious mothers — understand the value of money, and consider men famed for their millions worth a dozen who've wrapped themselves up in a few rags of some lesser kind of fame."

"You call being a great artist a lesser kind of fame?"

"I didn't once. But since I've got into the money-making habit, I've accepted the world's opinion."

"Pooh!" said I rudely. "I don't believe you have, because the first minute I saw you, I felt sure you were a *real* man. That's why I just had to speak to you in the station, instead of one of the others. I knew — by in-

stinct, I suppose, as you say I know about motors. Think of the glory of being able to *create* beautiful things!"

"Think of being able to buy them! Jewels and castles and yachts, and all sorts of things that women love. Motor-cars for instance."

"You could buy motor-cars with money you earned by painting pictures, couldn't you?"

"Yes; but not castles or yachts: and not enough jewels to please princesses who haven't spent eighteen years in a glass retort."

"Well," I said, "I may be no judge, but I think jewels and castles would be a bother, and I should be seasick in yachts. Give me a man who brings beautiful things out of his soul, not out of his pockets. You're very nice now; but you must have been much nicer before you buried your talents under the shields and bracelets you told me about. Even I know what you mean by them — and what happened to Tarpeia."

"*Even* you! I begin to think you were born knowing about a good many things besides motor-cars. And you are entirely right. I was much nicer before I began to collect the shields and bracelets."

"Can't you give a lot of them away, and do what I said — go back to the time before you bargained for them?"

"You don't understand how difficult it is to go back."

"But you are back — in Scotland."

"You're right. Now's my one chance to return to my youth and ideals. Bright little Princess, thank you for polishing up the dulled surface of my soul."

"It's only the surface that needs polishing," said I.

"The inside part is shining, even when the outside looks dim. But I'm afraid you're making fun of me?"

"I was never more in earnest. I'm crossing more than one border with you to-day."

"Borders you like crossing?"

"Great heavens, yes!"

"I'm glad of that," said I, in a self-satisfied way, "for then you won't miss Mrs. West so much."

"Miss Mrs. West? Good Lord, I'd forgotten her!"

"That's very ungrateful and horrid of you, then," I scolded him, "because you and she were friends, and she knows how to be perfectly charming."

"Yes. She knows how."

"She knows just what to do and say."

"Yes. She's an agreeable — and experienced — woman."

"And if it hadn't been for me, she'd be sitting by you now."

"I have little doubt of that."

"And you would have been happy."

"I should have been contented. There's a big difference between contentment and happiness. You can't have learned it, yet."

"Oh, can't I! It's all the difference between — between — well, the difference between this borderland seen on a dark day and seen on a day of sunshine. It's the same landscape, but it doesn't look the same to the eyes or give the same feelings to the heart. The dark-day feelings would be calm and quietly pleasant; the sunshine feelings would be full of thrills and heartbeats — as to-day."

"By Jove, you've hit it!" he exclaimed as if to please me by agreeing. "Full of thrills and heartbeats — as to-day."

"Then you *do* feel the romance of everything in this sunshine?" I asked, quick to drag a "yes" from him while he was in the mood.

"I should say I did. And I'm not ashamed, with you to back me up. But I've a sneaking idea I should have been ashamed of it with Mrs. West. And I shouldn't have felt the thrills, only a calm, peaceful pleasure, as in the gray days — contentment. I shouldn't have known what I was missing, perhaps. I should have respected myself for outgrowing my enthusiasms. But — in my best moments, Princess, I've pitied people more for not knowing what they miss in life than for missing the things."

"Yes," I answered, "because it's better to know there are beautiful things, and to want them in vain, than grub along without knowing of their existence. But all that's got nothing to do with Mrs. West."

"Perhaps not. Yet it has something to do with me. No need to bother about the connection."

"I won't bother about anything!" I laughed in my joy of life and of motoring, which seemed one and indivisible just then. "I'm wrapped up in the magic golden web that Sir Walter Scott and Burns have woven round every mile of this land across the border — *our* land, yours and mine."

"So am I, caught in the web, lost in it — to my own surprise." He laughed as he drove, his eyes alert and young. "Burns, by the way, came to Ecclefechan, where

we're arriving now. He had an uproarious time, and wrote verses to the Lass of Ecclefechan, which shows the place must have been a good deal livelier then than now. Or else, which is as likely, he had a faculty of squeezing the juice out of the driest, most unpromising fruit — the same faculty you have."

"Perhaps the fruit dried up later," I suggested. "Burns died soon after Carlyle was born, didn't he? And maybe people began to be primmer when they were forgetting his influence."

"No. Those of us Scots who were meant to be dour were always dour," Sir. S argued, "since the days of John Knox, and long before. It was partly climate — partly persecution. Both agreed with our constitutions. But look, here's the little house where one of the greatest geniuses who ever saw the light in Scotland first opened his eyes. I dare say he didn't get much light — but he spent most of his life in giving it to other people, out of his own gloom. Wouldn't Burns have been interested, passing that house (as he must have, in the 'uproarious time' at Ecclefechan), if his prophetic soul had said, 'Here, in this little dwelling as humble as your own birthplace, will be born a man as great as you — and one of your keenest critics?'"

I didn't answer, because no answer was needed, and because we were both gazing hard at a small, whitewashed, double house made into one by an archway joining the two parts together. Coming from Gretna Green it was on our left in the midst of a gray and white village which would have looked commonplace if it had not been framed by an immense sky. It was as if this vast blue crystal

case had been set down over Carlyle's birthplace to protect and mark it out from other places. There was the narrow, high-banked brook — "the gentle Kuhbach kindly gushing by" (as Sir S. quoted) — which had made music in Carlyle's childish ears, to echo through them all his life. Perhaps he paddled in the brook on hot summer days, just as little boys were paddling when our Gray Dragon suddenly broke the respectable silence of Ecclefechan; and I know that he must have seen stormy sunrises and fiery sunsets reflected in it as in a mirror, just as the Lady of Shalott saw all the things that really mattered passing in her looking-glass.

It is the kind of village, and the gray or whitewashed houses with their red door-sills are the kind of houses, where you would say, rushing through in a motor, "Nothing can possibly happen." Yet Carlyle happened; and he was an event for the whole world, which now makes pilgrimages to his birthplace. And I think that when his memory travelled back to Ecclefechan, he would not have changed it for a garden of palaces and flowers and fountains. Even the wee bairns playing in the road where Carlyle played, knew why we stopped our car. They pointed out the Carlyle house, gazing at us in solemn pity because we were poor tourist-bodies, who couldna bide the rest of our lives in the best village in a' the wurlld.

For my part, I pitied them, because their feet were bare, whereas the poorest children in my native Carlisle have wonderfully nice shoes, bound in brass. But all the Scot — and perhaps the crofter — rose in Sir S. when I mourned over the little dusty feet. "Do you think they go barefoot because they've no shoes?" he asked. "You're

wrong. You don't know your own country-folk yet. They've as good shoes as those Carlisle kids, and better, maybe. It's because they don't like the feel of the shoes when they play, and they're saving them for Sundays. I did the same myself. Not a pair of shoes did I have on my feet, except on the Sabbath day, till I was turned eleven."

It seemed to me that suddenly he had quite a Scotch burr in his voice, and I did like him for it!

An apple-cheeked old body opened the door. On it was a brass plate which would have told us, if we hadn't known already, that in this house Thomas Carlyle was born. Remembering what he grew to be and to mean in the big world, the three tiny rooms and the few simple relics were a thousand times more pathetic than if we'd been led through apartment after apartment of a palace, seeing christening cups and things under glass cases. They did not seem sad to me, only a little dour in a wholesome way, as porridge is dour compared to plum-cake. But the cemetery which we went to after we had seen the house made me want to cry. I didn't like to think that, coming back here to sleep after all those many years, Carlyle had not his wife to rest beside him. Lying with his ain folk behind grim iron railings couldn't have consoled him for her absence. This is the only graveyard I ever saw except the one where my father is buried; and somehow, it doesn't seem respectful to the dead to go and criticise their graves, unless you are their friends, bringing them flowers — pansies for thoughts and rosemary for remembrance. It's like walking into people's houses and opening their doors to look at them in bed when they're asleep, and

can't resent your intrusion, though they would hate it if they knew. I said this to Sir S., and he partly agreed with me on principle; but he warned me that there are cemeteries I must visit in Scotland unless I want to miss the last volumes of several interesting human documents. I don't know exactly what a human document is; still, I suppose I shall go to the graveyards for the sake of finding out what he means.

He spoke as if I were likely to go to these places with him, and said that he would enjoy showing me Carlyle's house in Chelsea, which is "more full of the man's heart and soul than Ecclefechan is." But, of course, he said this without stopping to think. He will go back to America and forget the forlorn little princess he happened to rescue from a neighbouring dragon. Yet never mind, I shan't be forlorn after this! I shall have my mother, and mothers are more important to princesses than the most glittering knights. I shall, of course, travel about with her wherever she goes, so I can never be lonely or sad. I ought to be even more impatient than I am for the day to come when she is due in Edinburgh, and I can surprise her there: but I suppose, having lived without her so long, it is difficult to realize that I'm actually to see her at last. However, I think of her every minute — or perhaps every other minute; and I haven't fully realized until to-day how much there is for which I have to thank her: the gayety and hopefulness she must have kept in her heart, and handed down to me. Without gayety and hopefulness neither of us would have dared or cared to run away from Hillard House.

I think, far-fetched as it seems, it was seeing Carlyle's

birthplace, and feeling the influence of his parents upon him, which made me understand. Great genius as he was, I wonder if he might not have been even greater if his mother or father had taught him that it was right to be happy and wrong to be sad? Sir S. says that Jenny his wife could have taught him all that, if he had chosen to learn; but he was grown up then, and so it was too late. The sunshine must be in your blood when you are a child, and then no shadows can ever quite darken the gold — or at least, that is the thought which has come into my mind to-day.

It was the right thing to turn southward off the Glasgow highway after Ecclefechan, to go to Annan and see the place where Carlyle got his schooling. The Gray Dragon, travelling slowly (for it, or "her," as Sir S. and Vedder always say), came to the end of the journey in a few minutes; but when Carlyle walked along that pleasant shadowy road, carrying his school books, he must have had plenty of time for day-dreams. Now and then he could have seen the Solway gleaming, and I can imagine how the beautiful, winding river must have given that grave, wise boy thoughts of the great river of life, running to and from eternity. We passed close to Hoddam Hill, where — Sir S. and Mrs. James told me — the Carlyle family lived for a while when Thomas was grown up, he translating German romances, and his brother working on the farm.

At Annan, looking at the statue of Carlyle's friend, Edward Irving, in the broad High Street, we came back to the subject of Doctor James, and I heard for the first time the real truth at the bottom of the bad gossip.

We had got down from the car to look at the statue, and

read what it said on the pedestal. We were not thinking at first about the doctor, but only of Edward Irving, and Sir S. was saying to Mrs. James how Annan was only one of many towns where statues are put up to the memory of men once misunderstood and cruelly persecuted in the very place where they are afterward honoured. It seems that Edward Irving (who loved Mrs. Carlyle when she was Jenny Welsh) had to come back to his native town to be tried for heresy by the presbytery, after a brilliant career in London as a fashionable preacher and founder of a new faith. All the theologians of Scotland and crowds of other people (Sir S. says all true Scots are theologians at heart) came pouring into Annan by coach and chaise on the great day of the trial; and in spite of Irving's passionate appeal, he was found guilty by a unanimous vote.

Talking of the trial, and of the preacher's death the next year, took Mrs. James's mind to the subject which is never farther away than at the back of her head. She found a likeness between Edward Irving's fate and her husband's. "Richard was born in Carlisle and loved the place, but they believed evil of him and persecuted him," she said. "Some day he will come back and make Carlisle proud of her son. That's what I expect. That's what I live for." And she gazed up at the statue of Irving the preacher with quite the look of a prophetess in her eyes.

I was afraid that Sir S. would think her mad; but he seemed interested, as before, and asked if she had in her mind any particular kind of success her husband might be working to obtain. Was there something, apart from his profession, and the unfinished volume of history, which had occupied the thoughts of Doctor James in old days?

The little woman answered this question almost reluctantly, and I soon guessed why. There was a serum which the doctor had been trying to perfect. It was to be used instead of chloroform or ether, for people with weak hearts, or when for other reasons anæsthetics were dangerous. A patient in peril of death had begged Doctor James to try it upon him. The doctor had consented. The patient had died, and though it was not really because of the serum, but because the man couldn't possibly have lived in any case, the doctor's enemies had blamed him. "That was what broke his heart," Mrs. James explained, still staring at the statue with wide-open eyes, to keep the tears from falling. "That is why he died to the world which misjudged him."

"And do you think, if he can perfect this serum, he will come back?" asked Sir Somerled.

"*When*, not 'if.' But I always knew it would take a long time, because unless some rich person or people had faith and helped him, he would have to get together a good deal of money for a laboratory before he could make a great success or a great name. And he went away almost without a penny."

"I see," said Sir S., thoughtfully. "Well, such faith as yours is enough to inspire a man with courage to push the stone of Sisyphus to the top of the hill. And it deserves a high reward. I hope the reward may come, and that I may see the day. Now, we must go on, for this afternoon won't last as long as I could wish."

He helped Mrs. James to her place with extra kindness, almost tenderness, tucking behind her back the gray silk-covered air-cushion which she says makes her feel she is leaning against a nice pudding.

Neither of us had asked Sir S. what we were to see next, for we trusted him to choose; but when we were ready to leave Annan and go back to the high road, he said that the thought of Galloway was haunting him. "We can spin on to Glasgow by way of Moffat and see a lot of interesting places; or we can turn west from Carlyle country, for a run through Crockett country," he explained. "Which shall it be?"

I was ashamed to confess that I didn't know why he called Galloway "Crockett country"; but Mrs. James saw my sheepish look, and excused me. "The child has had no novels to read later than Scott."

"Crockett has done for Galloway what Scott did for Tweedside," said Sir S. "It's his country. He has made it live. When I give this girl the promised present of Carlyle and Shakespeare, I must add Crockett. That is, as she reminded me" — and he smiled — "if Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald allows Ian of that ilk to lay gifts at her daughter's feet."

"Oh, she'll permit Barrie to accept books," said Mrs. James, with her pretty primness. "How the child will love the 'Raiders,' and the 'Men of the Moss Hags.' Yes, certainly she ought to see 'gray Galloway.'"

"Galloway be it, then," said Sir S., looking pleased. "But it won't be gray at this time of year. It will be purple and gold and emerald, and silvered with rivers running between flowery banks. And it will smell sweet as a Scotsman's paradise, with bog myrtle and peat."

"I too have often wanted to see Galloway," said Mrs. James, "even before I read the Crockett books; for the

doctor devoted a particularly interesting chapter to its history. I remember well, the ancient name was most romantic: Gallgaidhel, for the country of the stranger Gaels. That was the heading he gave his chapter, and I fear I did not know what 'stranger Gaels' meant until I read it. The Celtic Gaels who lived there used to be called Atecott Picts; and though they were very independent and wild, and the Romans didn't govern them long, they accepted the Northumbrians as their overlords — oh, it must have been in the seventh century, I think. And two hundred years later they made common cause with the Vikings: so the other Gaels, who would have nothing to do with the foreigners, scornfully named the men of Galloway 'stranger Gaels.'"

"It was just jealousy, then!" said I. "Because the people of Galloway were so broad-minded and hospitable, and ahead of their times. It's the right country for strangers to visit first ——"

"But we're not strangers," Sir S. cut me short. "You and I, Barrie, are coming into our own. To-night for the first time you'll sleep in your ain countree, under the 'heather moon.'"

"It ought to be a wonderful place, for our first night of the heather moon," I said, half shutting my eyes — "a mysterious, beautiful, *lucky* place, to remember always. What shall it be? Have you decided on what is appropriate?"

"I'd thought of Dumfries," he said. "But it doesn't answer that description, and though it's in Galloway, it concerns Burns and is out of Crockett land. Still ——"

"Sweetheart Abbey!" Mrs. James exclaimed raptur-

ously. "It should be at Sweetheart Abbey that Barrie dreams her first Scottish dreams."

The knight laughed rather bitterly for some reason. "Are Scottish dreams different from other dreams?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. James, "they are the dreams that come true."

## VI

IT IS days later, it seems a long time ago that I wrote of our plan to spend the first night in Scotland at Sweetheart Abbey — a long time since the night itself; for I have lived more in these few days than in all my life before.

Soon we are to reach Edinburgh. Monday is the day when my mother will begin acting there in her new play. I shall see her. It is to be the Great Day of all, the day to which all the others have been leading up, and I ought to be perfectly happy. So I am! Still, there's one little heavy spot in my heart. All the yeast of happiness won't make it light. The beginning of the new means the end of the old. The trip will be over — for me; though the Knight and the Gray Dragon will go on and have hundreds of adventures without me. They will be my knight and my dragon no longer. Perhaps I shall never see them again.

Before our days together slip away into the background of my mind (it seems as if they never could!) I want to write down things about them to keep and read when I am *old*.

First of all, there was Ruthwell Cross.

We went there from Annan; and as we flew along in the car over a good white road, we could see across widening waters the mountains of the English Lake country floating

like a mirage along the southern sky, Skiddaw with its twin peaks higher and bluer than the rest. How I love the names of the Cumberland places and mountains! I made Sir S. say Helvellyn and Blencathra and Glaramara over very slowly, just for the music in my ears. And when his voice says a thing it sounds particularly well. I like to hear it roll out such a word as Northumberland, for instance. The way he says it makes you think of thunder on great moorlands, or a rush of wild Scotsmen over the border. But the Celtic names he speaks most lovingly, most softly, so that they ring on your ear for a long time after they are spoken, like an echo of fairy bells.

I did not mean to write all this about him and his voice when I began. There is so much else to say. Yet, somehow, I keep running back to him in my thoughts, especially now the trip is nearly over. And while I still cling to the subject, I have found out that he can sing as well as paint. But the singing belongs to Sweetheart Abbey; and Ruthwell Cross came before.

Mrs. James and Sir S. excited my interest in Galloway by telling me bits from the "Raiders," then stopping in exciting places to talk of something else. And somehow Galloway does seem a country where almost anything might happen — big, sensational, historic things. There was nothing gray to see except glimpses of the Solway, where the sea poured in its resistless tide; and that was the gray of polished silver. I had an impression of high hills, blunt in shape yet strangely dignified, and wide-spreading moors which sent out exquisite smells like lovely unseen messengers to meet us, as the car seemed to break through crystal walls of wind. Here and there were

piles of pansy-brown peat, ready for burning. Children with heads wrapped in scarlet flame ran out of cottages to stare at us. Sir S. actually admired their red hair. He exclaimed suddenly, "By Jove, it's worth crossing the ocean to see that glorious stuff again! It's the hair of Circe." I don't know when anything has made me feel so much like a kitten that purrs over a dish of cream. For you know the hair he loved was *just* my colour, not a bit less scarlet. What would Grandma say?

It rained once — sharp rain like thin daggers of glass stabbing our faces as the car dashed through — and the wet road looked like a shining silver ribbon flung down anyhow on purple velvet. The purple velvet was heather, and I never saw any before we started on our trip, except a little sad, tame heather in the garden of Hillard House— heather moulting like a bird in a cage, with all the spirit of the moors gone out of it. But this Galloway heather was real heather, the heather of poetry; and I knew that by and by I was going to see the heather moon rise over it. The very thought brought a thrill — and I was glad, as I had it, that Mrs. West was somewhere else in her own car. She does so damp you, somehow, in your high moments, and make you feel too young for anybody to care for your crude little thrills or take them seriously.

When the rain stopped, it left a thin white mist floating over the heather, until the sun broke out and the deep purple was lit to crimson, like a running fire.

I'm not quite sure if all this happened before Ruthwell Church (called Rivvel by the people near), but in my memory it is part of the same picture, of that first day in Galloway.

I know we skimmed through a little place called Cummer-trees, and then Sir S. slowed down to show us, he said, one of the "sights of the world." He had never seen it himself, but he knew all about it, and even Mrs. James knew a little. It is a great advantage to a simple woman to have had a clever husband, and feel obliged to live up to him.

We had come not so much for the church as for a wonderful stone cross which it contains, as a jewel-box contains treasure of pearls and diamonds. This cross is worth countless numbers of both; and it has a history as intricate as its own strange carvings.

In the manse they gave Sir S. the key of the small old church behind a high wall with steps up and down: and once inside he led us straight to the north end, where, in a side aisle, we saw a great shape rise. We must have known it to be a marvel, even if we had heard nothing beforehand.

The cross used to stand, not in the church, but out in the open long before the church was built, and it towered eighteen feet tall against the sky. There it lived year after year, generation after generation, and nobody knew what its carved birds and beasts and hieroglyphic inscriptions meant. Nobody cared much, until a gloomy set of men in a General Assembly, when Charles I was King of England, threw it down and broke it up, because it was an idolatrous emblem. Luckily, some wise person hid all the pieces in the church; but after a while another person not so wise threw them out into the backyard. There they stayed until a Doctor Duncan thought he would have the cross put up in his manse garden: and some

great Norwegian scholars, to whom he sent copies of the writings, grew very excited, and contradicted each other about them in 1802. But no one knew what the letters really meant till the eldest son of the famous actor John Kemble came to the neighbourhood for a holiday. He was a learned authority on Anglo-Saxon times, and he discovered that the writing was really Early English, the very earliest of all, the rudiments of the language which — as Sir S. expressed it — "Chaucer helped to form and Shakespeare perfected"; because they had to *make* their words, as well as group them together — which is all that lazy authors have to do nowadays. The quaint carvings relate to the life of Christ and saints, and they are described in Latin from the Vulgate; but it was the runic inscriptions which John Mitchell Kemble puzzled out — a kind of rhymed soliloquy the cross itself was supposed to speak; and afterward he found the whole thing in an Anglo-Saxon MS. of the seventh or eighth century, far away from Scotland, in a library at Vercelli, near Milan. But it was written by the Northumbrian bard Caedmon, in a poem called "The Dream of the Holy Rood."

No wonder Sir S. wished to see Ruthwell Cross. There s nothing else of the kind, he thinks, so splendid anywhere.

Even then my first wonderful day in Scotland wasn't over, for we had time to see Caerlaverock Castle, which, according to Sir S., is another of the best things on earth. I suppose, in old days, when the world was small because it was difficult to travel great distances, it didn't seem odd to find magnificent runic crosses, and castles, and historic blacksmiths' shops, and houses of geniuses all standing cheek by jowl within a step of each other. They had to

be like that, or nobody from the next county would ever have seen them: but now, especially to a person who has seen nothing except in dreams, it is startling, almost incredible.

Caerlaverock, Mrs. James said, was probably Scott's Ellangowan in "Guy Mannering"; so I shall read "Guy Mannering" as soon as I settle down to live with my mother. We couldn't help getting a little mixed up with Scott even here, at the gate of the Crockett country; and there were traces of Burns too, because of our being near already to Dumfries, where he lived for years and finally died. But the idea Sir S. had set his heart upon was for us to come back to Dumfries after we had seen Galloway and had run up to Burns's birthplace at Ayr. It would make each part of the trip more "concrete," he said.

Whether or no the stronghold of the Maxwells was Ellangowan, it was in any case the key to southwest Scotland, and in looking at the place it is easy to understand why. A great red-gold Key it was when we saw it, red-gold in the western sunlight in a hollow near the river; such red and gold colour as the old sandstone had, in contrast with the green of lichen and green of waving grass, I wouldn't have believed in, if I'd seen it in a picture. I should have said, "The artist who painted that ruined castle put on the colours he would like to see, not those he did see." But I should have misjudged him, because the colours were real.

Once there was a double moat all round the vast, triangular castle, and still there's water in one of them. You would have thought the Maxwell ladies had thrown their rubies and diamonds into it one wild day when they were

escaping from enemies, and that the jewels had lain ever since at the bottom of the moat unnoticed, though the sunlight found out and treacherously tried to tell the secret. Think of Ptolemy writing about Caerlaverock, and calling it Carbantorigun! I'm glad we haven't to call it that now, or I should always have to say *it* — as one goes on saying "you" to a person whose name one hasn't caught.

Even if Caerlaverock were in hideous surroundings, it would be magnificent: but the river Solway is its silver foreground, and Lochar Moss is its mysterious background; so it is perfect in beauty as in strength, and if only no such hateful things as cannons had been invented, it would not now be a ruin. Although it lies so low, it was built to resist everything but gunpowder: for how could the Maxwells dream that all their beautiful arrangements for pouring down molten lead and boiling oil would be useless against a new foe?

Edward I took the castle in 1300, but Bruce got it back thirteen years later; and there was much fighting and tossing back of the Key from one hand to the other even before the great siege when the Earl of Essex punished Lord Herries for defending Queen Mary. Still, the walls stood bravely, and after the Essex affair they were made stronger than ever — so strong and so splendid it must have seemed as if Caerlaverock need never capitulate again to any enemy. But no sooner had the Maxwells finished a lovely new façade, the best they'd ever had, with carved window and door caps of the latest fashion, than Colonel Home came along with his grim Covenanters and blew up everything with his horrid cannons. I can't

help disliking him, for the Maxwells seem to have been the most fascinating people. One Lord Maxwell of the seventeenth century, who was Roman Catholic when it wasn't safe to be Roman Catholic, used to disguise himself as a beggar, and play the fiddle in the market-place of Dumfries as a signal to tell the faithful of his own religion where and when they might come to Mass. They understood according to certain tunes agreed upon, which was easy, as they had only three meeting-places. A nice old man in the castle told us these stories and showed us the exquisite courtyard where Burns came one day when he was seventeen and cut on a stone in the wall the initials R. B. in a triangle, like a masonic sign, which suggests the wedge shape of the castle.

Sir S. knew all about this carving, and said that Americans had offered two thousand pounds for the stone. But the Duchess of Norfolk, who is mistress of Caerlaverock in her own right, turned up her nose, metaphorically speaking, at the offer. "I bid ye fair" is the motto that goes with the crest over the huge gateway between two towers, and the rumour is that the Americans, in bidding for the stone of the initials, quoted this motto; but their aptness did them no good. In one of those towers Murdoch, the blind Duke of Albany, was imprisoned for seven years by James I before he was executed at Stirling; and they say that in the green hollow where the great red ruin glows he can be seen walking in the moonlight on the anniversary of his beheading.

One of my favourite stories in history is about Lord Nithsdale and his brave, clever wife who saved him on the eve of his execution by dressing him in her clothes and

letting him walk calmly out of the Tower of London in her place. Think of being able to do such a thing for a man you loved! He was one of the Lords Nithsdale who came from Caerlaverock; and not far away, at Terregles House, is a portrait of that Countess of Nithsdale, with the cloak which her husband wore when he escaped. They have a Prayer Book, too, of Queen Mary's in that house, for she gave it to Lord Herries, who sheltered her in her flight after the battle at Langside, eighty miles away. But we didn't see these things. It was the old man at the castle who told us of them, because they are still in the keeping of the Maxwell family, of which he is very proud.

We hurried quickly through Dumfries, not to see or think of the Burns associations there until we should come back; but at Lincluden Abbey, close by, we were forced to think of him — although, as far as our trip was concerned, he wasn't born. At Lincluden, where he loved to come, walking out from Dumfries (as he must have walked to Caerlaverock to cut his initials) he saw the Vision. And Lincluden is so sweet a place that my thoughts of it, mingling very humbly with the great poet's thoughts, will lie together in my memory as pressed flowers lie between the pages of a book.

The road which leads from Dumfries to Lincluden seems like a quiet prelude to a lovely burst of music, so gentle and pretty it is. Then suddenly you come to the promontory stitched on to the mainland with great silver stitches of rivers, the Cluden and the Nith; and there are old earthworks, fallen into ruin, which guard the Abbey as the skeletons of watch-dogs might lie guarding a dead master. There's a mound, too, by the side of the

ruined church, and it is called a Mote, which means something desperately interesting and historic, and there's a Peel-tower in ruin. Indeed, all is in ruin at Lincluden Abbey; but that makes it the sweeter and sadder. And as we came, the red of the crumbling sandstone burned in the fire of sunset like a funeral pyre heaped with roses. The melancholy, crowding trees and the delicate groups of little bushes were like mourners coming with their children to look on at the great burning.

We went into the church to see the tomb of Margaret Countess of Douglas, who was a daughter of King Robert the Third; and somehow the mutilations of the effigy made it more beautiful, causing you to see as in a blurred picture the thousand events of troublous times which had passed over the figure, leaving it through all peacefully asleep. A daughter of a king, with the Douglas Heart to guard her, she would be too noble in her stony slumber to show that she minded losing her features and a few other trifling accessories which might spoil the looks of less important women.

When we came out, high in the sunset glory gleamed a silver sickle, reaping roses. It was the heather moon, and I cried out to Sir S. as I saw it, "Wish — wish! Your first sight of the heather moon, and over our right shoulders for luck! Whatever we wish *must* come true!"

I was so excited that I seized his hand; and he was too polite to give it back to me like a thing he didn't want. So he held it firmly in his while we both looked up to the sky, silently making our wishes. My wish was to be that my mother might love me; but I stopped and thought, "What is the good of making such a wish, when I've

only one, and I'm sure to get that one without the heather moon, as mothers all love their children." This caution was very "canny" and proved my Scottish blood, I couldn't help thinking, as I paused in order to select the most appropriate wish for the heather moon to grant.

Several ideas presented themselves with a bow: a wish to be happy: but that wasn't "concrete" enough, as Sir S. would say. A wish to be very rich and able to do anything in the world I might like to do; but being rich sounds so fat and uninteresting — or else bald-headed; for nearly all the photographs in picture papers of desperately rich people are one or the other, or both. At last I began to be nervous, for if Sir S. or Mrs. James (who was close by) should speak before I'd given my wish to the new moon, she'd be unable to grant it, even with the best intentions. That is a well-known fact in connection with wishing by the moon. I have it on the authority of both Mrs. Muir and Heppie. Being in a hurry, I grew confused, and so could think of nothing more important than to wish for my knight never to forget me in future, wherever he may be. And just as I'd finished, he said, "Well? What did you wish?"

Of course I couldn't tell him such a wish as that; but, luckily, you must never let anybody know what you've wished by a moon or a star, if you want the wish to come true.

I explained this to Sir S., and he said, as far as he was concerned, it didn't matter, for he hadn't wished after all. "Oh, what a waste of the heather moon!" I cried, for it really seemed too bad. But he answered that the only thing he particularly wished for just then was a thing

which wasn't fair to wish, on account of the "other party concerned." I laughed, and said if he had *wished* to wish, he had wished, in spite of himself, and the heather moon had heard; because that's the business of any well-trained new moon, and the heather moon is the best-trained of the year. "'The other party concerned' must just take the risk," I said. "And very likely 'twill be the best thing for him, her, or it in the end."

"I daren't hope that," said he, looking up at the silver sickle as earnestly as if we weren't talking nonsense.

"Don't you think the heather moon knows best?" I reproached him. But he did not answer, and only hummed under his breath, as we walked to the waiting car:

> "How far, how far to Gretna ?
> It's years and years away —
> And coach-and-four shall nevermore
> Fling dust across the day."

All the way along the shadowy, switchback road from Dumfries going to Sweetheart Abbey (I like to write the name, it is so pretty and old-fashioned) we had glimpses of the moon scattering silver through the tree branches as she fell down the west. I thought the soft white curve like a baby's arm, rounded at the elbow; and it waved us good-night over the heather-clad mound of Criffel, as a baby might wave over the fat shoulder of a big nurse dressed in purple. It is *cheek* of Criffel to call itself a mountain, and of course it wouldn't dare to if there were other real mountains within twenty-five miles.

When I made this remark Mrs. James asked me where, in my sequestered life, I had got hold of such an unladylike

word as "cheek," but I told her I must have been born knowing it, as there was never a time in my memory when I didn't. Also Mr. Douglas had used it several times in Carlisle Castle.

"Haven't you forgotten him yet?" asked Sir S.

"It would be silly to forget, and have to make his acquaintance over again at Edinburgh," I said. "He asked me particularly to think of him during our trip whenever I should see the Douglas Heart. Now I have just seen it at Lincluden."

"Douglas Heart indeed! Douglas cheek!" I heard Sir S. mutter.

There is one part of that road between Dumfries and Sweetheart Abbey I shall never forget: the view from Whinny Hill — a sudden view springing from behind trees, as if a green curtain had been pulled back from a picture. In this picture there were the silver Nith, and purple Criffel of course (which always tries to get itself noticed wherever you turn), a great forty-foot monument put up to commemorate Waterloo; and again the red triangle of Caerlaverock glowing on the green shore of the Solway Firth.

I suppose the people who were shy of seeming sentimental insisted on calling Sweetheart Abbey New Abbey. I can imagine Sir S. voting for the change, because I fancy that he would endure torture rather than be thought sentimental. He describes a place or a thing or a person glowingly, then hurries to cap his description with a few joking or even ironical words, lest he should be suspected of romance or enthusiasm.

The village is called New Abbey too, so it is safe to

mention that to the driest person. It was just beginning to be evening, an evening softly gray as doves' wings folding down, when our Dragon sidled toward an inn it saw, quite a nice little inn, where Sir S. announced that we would stop the night. Before going in, however, he took us to look at a queer bas-relief built into the wall of a whitewashed cottage on the left side of the road. It showed three ladies industriously rowing a boat across the ferry — pious dames who brought all the stones from Caerlaverock, on the other side of the Solway, to build the Abbey.

"Rock of the Lark" is a delightful name, but Sweetheart Abbey is prettier, and the reason of the name is the prettiest part. Only I wish that the devoted Devorgilla who built the Abbey of Dolce Cor to be a big sacred box for the heart of her husband had had a worthier object of worship than the king, John Balliol. All the history I have ever read makes him out to be a weak and cowardly and rather treacherous person; but, as Sir S. said, "Mirabeau judged by the people and Mirabeau judged by his friends were two men"; and I suppose John must have put himself out to be charming to Devorgilla, or she wouldn't have wandered about with his heart in an ebony box inlaid with silver, and insisted on having it on the table in front of her when she ate her dinner. That was one way of keeping her husband's heart during her whole lifetime — and even after death, for of course she had it buried with her. It must have been glad of a little rest by that time, the poor heart, for it had so much travelling to do. I suppose it even went as far as Oxford when Devorgilla founded Balliol College.

The last shaft of the sun was turned off the rose-coloured ruin and the secluded valley where the cross-shaped Abbey hides from the world; and the moon was gone, too, swept away like a tiny boat on a wave of sunset. Still, it was full daylight, and Sir S. announced that he had a plan. This plan was for us to go (as soon as we'd seen our rooms, which he had engaged by telegram) and get permission to enter the Abbey by twilight, when no one else was there.

The little gray inn of the town looked no bigger than a good-si ed private house, but it was the very first hotel of my life, and I regarded it as an Epoch, with a capital E. That point of view was upheld later by the heavenly scones and honey they gave us — heather honey, gold as the heather moon. And we had cool, clean rooms, suitable for the dreaming of sweet dreams. *My* dreams there seemed very important.

The great Somerled can of course get anything he wants to ask for if he chooses to reveal himself — anyhow, in Scotland; because already I am beginning to learn that even the smallest or humblest Scottish peasant knows all that's worth knowing, not only of the past but of the present, and has heard of all the celebrities. Maybe there might be miniature places in England, America, Germany, or France where the poor and uneducated would know nothing of Somerled the painter and millionaire. But in Scotland, apparently, though there are many poor, there are no uneducated persons. Those to whom his being a painter would mean nothing would be interested in his money. Those who didn't care for his millions of dollars would have read about his paint

ing: and all would value him because he belongs to Scotland.

As soon as our luggage was in our rooms and dinner ordered, Sir Somerled inquired if we were ready for the Abbey; but Mrs. James mildly asked if we would mind going without her. She had begun to realize that she was tired, and would like to rest. She could go by herself to the Abbey early in the morning before starting time. I felt that I ought to mind more than I did, but I couldn't help liking to be with Sir S. alone. It seemed like the night of our first meeting; for some one had always been with us, more or less, ever since. It was only a short stroll through the village, not enough to call a walk. A dear little lady who lives in a nice cottage close to the ruin opened the iron gate, but she did not go in with us, because it was time for her supper. She had a photograph done from one of the great Somerled's most famous pictures, and if he had been a king she could not have been more polite.

At first, the inside of the shell-like Abbey with the beautiful name was a disappointment. The green grass was encumbered with tasteless graves and flat modern stones which looked as if they had lain down there without permission.

We wandered about rather forlornly for a while, until we found Devorgilla's thirteenth-century tomb. Sir S. told me her history, and waked the sad old place to living interest. I seemed to see the ever-loving lady, followed by her chosen maidens carrying the heart in its ebony and silver box. And together we made up a theory, that of every event *something* reminiscent lingers on the spot where it happened. If only our eyes were different, we

should be able, wherever we went, to see filmy, mysterious pictures painted on air — fadeless, moving photographs of all the people and all the deeds which have made up the world's history.

This set us talking of our own pictures, which we are leaving behind us as we go through life; and I couldn't help thinking how he and I, in accordance with this idea, will for ever and ever go on being "married" at Gretna Green. I laughed at the thought, and he asked me why, so I told him.

"When you're marrying your real wife, years from now maybe, and have forgotten my existence, that scene will still be enacting itself," I said, "not only on the films the photograph men took, but on air films. Doesn't it frighten you?" I asked.

"Doesn't it frighten you?" he echoed. "Because you will marry. I never shall."

"How do you know?" I catechized him.

"If I can't have the wife I want, I'll have none."

"Perhaps you can have the one you want if you ask her nicely."

"I don't intend to ask. I'm not the right one for her."

"You might let her decide that!" I nobly said, for Mrs. West may be the woman. "I do hope, if men ever love me, they'll tell me so."

"No fear! They will." He laughed more loudly than I have heard him laugh.

"But the right one mayn't, if he thinks as you do."

"He won't. He'll be thinking only of himself. But look here, my girl, be sure you *do* take the right one when you marry; for if in my opinion you're likely to make a big

mistake when the time comes, I may be tempted to put a spoke in the fellow's wheel."

"Please do!" I laughed.

"You think I'm joking," he said, watching me in a way he has, between narrowed lids, his eyes almost black in the twilight. "And so I am to a certain extent. Yet I might forbid the banns, perhaps — if I chose."

"But how?"

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Not half a one."

"Then I won't tell. It would only worry you — for nothing. Marry in peace, when your Prince comes, and I'll send you my blessing — from far away."

"I don't like to think of your being far away," I said. "Let's not talk of it. For you are my only friend — except Mrs. James. And you're so different."

"I thank Heaven!" he said. "And I thank her for wanting a rest. Good as she is, three would be a crowd in Sweetheart Abbey."

Speaking of her made me think of the time. We had promised Mrs. James to go back in half an hour for dinner! Already more than half an hour had slipped away as we made our air-film photographs to haunt Sweetheart Abbey with all its other ghosts.

The twilight was changing to a light more mysterious, and as we looked at each other through the opal haze I feit strangely that we were changing too. It was as if our realities were less real than the shadow pictures which were to live on here together forever — as if our bodies, which would go away and separate, to live different lives far away from one another, would not be *us* any more.

I could not have imagined so wonderful a light as that which illuminated the great rose-window and filled the vast broken shell of the Abbey. It was as if the day had been poured out of a cup, and night was being slowly poured in — the dove-gray night of dreams. It was pale, yet not bright like the light of dawn. It was more like a light glimmering over a sheet of water, a light made of the water itself. Almost I expected to see the Heart rise up in the ebony and silver box, and the box opening.

"You look like a young seeress," my Knight said. "What is it that you see with your great eyes gazing through the dusk?"

"I see — a heart," I answered. "I think I see a heart."

"That is very intelligent of you," he said, in a changed tone. "Come, child, it's time I took you home."

"Is there the ghost of a heart floating here?" I asked, wishing to linger. But he took my hand and drew me toward the gate.

"To me," he said dryly, "it appears to be a real heart — almost too real for comfort."

We walked back to the inn, and he was uninterestingly commonplace all the way. He talked about dinner, and buying petrol for the car, and told me dull facts about tiresome things called carburettors. It would have been a horrid anticlimax, spoiling all the romance of Sweetheart Abbey, if he had not changed later on. But he did change. There was a little piano in the sitting-room they gave us, and Mrs. James began drumming out a few Scotch airs, warbling the words in a high, thin voice rather like that of an intelligent insect. There was one tune I knew, and I couldn't resist joining in. At the end Sir S. applauded.

"What a pity her grandmamma wouldn't let her take lessons, as I once ventured to suggest!" said Mrs. James. "She has a true ear, and a sweet voice wonderfully like her mother's, which I quite well remember. But Mrs. MacDonald had the idea that music lessons would lead to vanity. Don't you think, sir" (she often slips in a respectful "sir"), "that her voice would repay instruction?"

"I do," pronounced the great Somerled.

"I'm sure *you* sing," went on Mrs. James. "I flatter myself I can always tell by people's faces."

"Like Barrie, I never had lessons," he said. "But I suppose we Highlanders are born with music in our blood."

"Then you do sing?" she persisted.

"Only to please myself. Not that it does!"

"Will you sing to please us?"

"It wouldn't please you."

"Barrie, *you* ask."

"The Princess commands!" I said, not expecting him to humour my impudence, but he did, by going at once to the piano. It had lisped and stammered awkwardly for Mrs. James, but it obeyed him as if the keys were mesmerized. He played a prelude, and then sang "Annie Laurie," in a soft, mellow voice, so low that people outside the room could hardly have heard. It seemed as if there must really be an "Annie Laurie" in his life. Surely a man could not sing like that, and look like that in singing, unless he called up the face of some woman he loved. I wondered if he thought of Mrs. West, who is so very pretty, and rather like the description of "Annie Laurie." His eyes looked far away as he sang, through the wall —

oh, yes, I'm sure they could see through the wall at that moment — perhaps as far as "Maxwellton Braes"; perhaps still farther, searching for Mrs. West wherever she might be.

I don't know how it would make one feel if such a man with such a voice looked into one's eyes and sang a song of love. I'm afraid it might make one rather foolish. But it was only at the wall that Sir S. stared until he began a very different song — the lament of a Highlander who would nevermore see his island home nor the love of his youth. It was a heart-breaking song; and though his voice was pitched so low it was almost like singing in a whisper, there was a strange, vibrating power in it, as there is in the strings of a violin touched but lightly by the bow. Sir S. transferred his attention from the wall to me as he sang this sad old ballad, and I could not look away, because there was the same compelling power in his eyes as in his voice. No doubt it was only of the song he thought, not of me at all, really; yet I could not shake off the haunting impression of the look, and it made me dream of him all night. I saw him standing beside me in the strange, pale twilight of Sweetheart Abbey. And in his hand was a box of ebony, inlaid with silver, which he held out. But when I took the box it was locked, and he had no key. "Only the key of the rainbow will open this box," he said. And then I woke up, feeling somehow as if the dream were of importance, and I must try to find out why.

## VII

NEXT morning when I saw Sir S. I felt confused and vaguely ashamed, as if something had happened. But, of course, nothing had happened, nothing at all. I kept on reminding myself of that until I was at ease again. And his manner helped me to realize how silly I was, for almost he seemed to go out of his way to put on the commonplace air I had disliked. It was as if he wrapped himself up in a big, rough coat, smelling of tobacco smoke, and rather old and shabby, with the collar well turned up.

We started early, long before eight, and Mrs. James remarked, while we were dressing — calling out from her room to mine through the open door — that there was more credit for Sir S. than for us in liking an early start. Many men as successful and flattered and rich as he, she said, would have grown luxurious in their tastes, and lazy. They would loathe getting up at six, and staying in tiny hotels, and fussing about to help their chauffeurs when anything went wrong with their cars. They would hate so much having to pack bags and look after themselves that they would find it impossible to enjoy travelling without a valet; but here was this man, used to every luxury, and able to command it, putting himself to trouble of all sorts and even enduring hardships as cheerfully as a "little bank clerk out for a holiday with his sister and aunt."

I agreed with her, and I suppose bank clerks are as interesting a class as any; but I'm glad Sir S. is not one. And it is more fun being his princess than his sister. Mrs. James may be his aunt if she likes. I wouldn't be it for all his millions.

He asked her again if she would like to try the front seat, but she politely refused, and then, with his rough-coat, turned-up-collar-air, he invited me to take it. Something deep down in me, like a little live creature whispering, told me to make him turn down that collar and throw off that rough coat. It did seem such a *waste*, to have him wearing his commonplace airs while we travelled through the most adorable country we had seen yet. I wanted him and me and the scenery all to be romantic together, and so I told him at last. "But if I'm determined to keep on the safe side of romance?" he said.

"If you've decided to be dull and disagreeable," I threatened, "I shan't give you the 'rainbow key' when I find it. I'll hand it over to somebody else."

"Will you?" he said. "Be sure the somebody else deserves it, then."

This annoyed me. Because I'm looking for the rainbow key for *him*, not somebody else. "At present I don't happen to know anybody else I'd care to give it to," I remarked.

"Ay," said he, "there's the rub. You know so few. But it will be different when the princess has a dozen knights all in the competition."

"Perhaps other knights won't notice that I'm a princess."

"Judging from what I've observed, I think they'll be quick to notice that."

"Well, it remains to be seen."

"Just so. It remains to be seen." His voice sounded sad or bored, so I tried to be tactful for once, like Mrs. West, and changed the subject.

This was the road which Carlyle thought the most beautiful in the kingdom. Going to Mainsriddle and Dalbeattie we skimmed through dark, haunted-looking woods, to sudden glimpses of far-down yellow sands and floating forms of mountains. The tide was running out or running in, veining the floor of gold with misty blue traceries, and making bright pools like bits of broken glass. The trees along our way were a procession of benevolent giants holding green umbrellas over our heads, because they mistook us for expected royalties; and on the smooth white surface of the road they had scattered shadows like torn black Spanish lace. Criffel followed us everywhere, trying jealously to keep us from noticing that the noble mountains of Cumberland were still watching us out of sight, across the Solway Firth. And indeed, Criffel, with some small brother hills he had to-day collected, like the hasty gathering of a clan, did manage to destroy the effect of distance so far as he and his brethren were concerned. He and all the rest, no matter how far off, pushed themselves into the foreground by means of their colour, so violent a purple that it struck at the eyes, and vibrated in the ears like rich wild notes of an organ rolling over the uplands of Scotland. Only the sands and the sea looked distant, though really they were near; and I worried about the groups of cattle gossiping so pleasantly together about

their cuds and calves. They had a placid air of ignoring such large facts of life as incoming tides, and could never have read what happened to Mary and her cows on the sands of Dee, a resort only less fashionable in the cattle world than their own.

Lights on sky and sands, seen through the netting of tree branches, were like sweet bursts of laughter in the forests; and the glory of the heather was a wordless song in praise of Scotland. Yet in these flying Galloway landscapes there was an impression of the mystic and melancholy, which reminded Sir S. of "The Twilight of the Gods": strange purple rocks jutting out into water coldly bright as a sheet of mercury, and desolate islands remote and haunted as the place where Gunter and his sister lived in the opera. We seemed to be travelling through vast, lonely places, though it was but a part of Galloway, and all Scotland is but small — just large enough to give an eyeful of beauty always.

When we came to the sparkling granite town of Dalbeattie (a miniature Aberdeen, Sir S. called it) instead of going straight on toward Kirkcudbright we turned westward to see the great stronghold of the Black Douglases. It was no more than seven easy miles to Castle Douglas, a little modern town all laid out in rectangles. Sailing straight through, we came out on the edge of Carlingwark Loch, which rings a few green islets with silver; and taking a side road we were close to the river Dee. There, on a cushion of an island, only big enough to hold it, rose the great ruin of Thrieve Castle, the home of the proud and magnificent Douglases. Once boats must have carried the knights and ladies back and forth between the main-

land and the fourteenth-century fastness of old Archibald the Grim. But now I saw a line of half-submerged stepping-stones, the only way of crossing in these days when there is no fighting or feasting at Thrieve, and no "tassel" dangling from the knoblike "hanging stone" over the great gate.

> "Workers of high-handed outrage !
> Making King and people grieve,
> O the lawless Lords of Galloway !
> O the bloody towers of Thrieve !"

Sir S. quoted as we stared up at the giant keep, seventy feet high, with its tremendous walls. "They were a terrible power in the land, that family, at their greatest, when they lorded it over Galloway and Annandale, and owned Touraine and Longueville in France, and used to ride out with a retinue of a thousand picked horsemen."

"That nice soldier yesterday — Mr. Douglas at Carlisle — thinks they were a *charming* family," said I. "He has an old proverb something like this:

> "So many, so good as of Douglases have been
> Of one surname in Scotland never yet was seen."

and he told me a great deal about the Douglas Heart."

"He would!" mumbled Sir S. "There were good hearts and bad hearts among them, but all were great hearts in the old days; anyhow, I'm not surprised that Crockett got inspiration from this place when he used to play here, coming over from Castle Douglas, where he was at school. He must have had his head buzzing with story plots when he'd climbed up inside the walls and crawled out to sit

astride of the hanging stone. I'll warrant he saw Maclellan beheaded in the courtyard while Sir Patrick Gray, the King's messenger, supped with Douglas; and heard Mons Meg fire off the first granite cannon-ball, that shot away the hand of the Countess as she held a wine-glass up, drinking confusion to her enemies. No wonder little boy Crockett got absent-minded one day, when he dropped his watch instead of a pebble in wanting to test the time the stone would take to fall."

The next bit of Crockett-lore I heard was at Auchencairn in the deep, indented bay we'd reached by turning south for the coast again. There, it seemed, we were in the heart of Crockettland, for Hestan Island is the Rathan Island of the "Raiders." All round was sweet, welcoming country, low mountains and rippling meadows, where it seemed that the Douglas soldiers had laid their glittering helmets down in long straight ranks on a carpet of cloth o' gold. Over these fields of garnered wheat came a breeze from the sea, with a tang of salt like a tonic mixture, and there was a murmurous sound on the air, a message from the tide.

There were hundreds of historic things to see, in every direction, if we had had time for all: traces of the Attecott Picts; Pict forts and tombs, castles of the Middle Ages; robber caves; Convenanters' monuments; and at Balcarry, near Auchencairn, the landing-place of the smuggler Yawkins, who was Scott's "Dirk Hatteraick." But we had only five days for everything before the Great Day — which will be coming so soon now. From Auchencairn we turned inland to a rolling country where the Gray Dragon would be down one hill and halfway up another

before he knew what had happened. At Dundrennan — "Hill of the Thorn Bushes"— he had his first mishap; but after the surprise of thinking a bomb had exploded, I was glad he'd seized just that opportunity of bursting a tire, because it gave us more time for the Abbey than we should have given ourselves.

While the chauffeur made the dragon's toilet, patching up a fat white foot as he might have doctored the pad of an elephant, we wandered about, and finally decided to lunch in a secluded corner of the twelfth-century ruins.

Mrs. James and I set out our picnic-table, a folding thing that Sir S. carries in the car, and we counted on having the place to ourselves. Tourists though we are, we scorn other tourists. But it seems incredible that such as they can scorn us. We talked about Queen Mary and of her last meal within those walls, and it felt sacrilegious to laugh and joke where she had been so sad. We pictured her, young and beautiful, taking leave of the loyal men who had begged her in vain not to trust Elizabeth; and we could fancy the town turning out to see her vessel set sail — a very different town it would have been then from the charming little place it is to-day, with its low white cottages half covered with flowers, the spotless walls as clean as damask tablecloths, and all so gay and bright to the eye that grim Dundrennan Abbey in its midst is like a skull fallen in a rose-garden.

"Ah," sighed Mrs. James, shaking her head, with a jam puff in her hand, "if the Queen had listened to Maxwell she might have lived in safety to be an old woman!"

"True, she might have kept her head," Sir S. agreed, comfortably cutting himself a piece of plum cake; "but

if she'd taken Maxwell's advice, instead of sailing from Port Mary, never to see Scotland again, wouldn't the whole civilized world miss its best-loved heroine of romance? No other woman since history began has so captured the hearts of men, and made herself so adored through the centuries, in spite of all her faults, or because of them. Mary Stuart and Napoleon Bonaparte are the two figures in history of whom no one ever tires of talking or reading."

"Still, we must be sad at Dundrennan, where her last night in Scotland was spent," Mrs. James mildly persisted, having eaten her puff while Sir S. argued. "I wonder if Michael Scott the magician, who lived here (he comes into the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," you know), had prophetic visions of Queen Mary and her fate? I should think so, for he had the secret of all sorts of spells. The people of the neighbourhood believed that he'd locked up the plague in an underground room of the Abbey, and for years they dared not excavate for fear the demon should leap out and ravage the country. They used to think they could hear a rustling ——"

At that instant we heard one ourselves; a distinct rustling fell upon our ears, and made us turn round with a start. The plague we feared was tourists; but if it had been Michael Scott's demon, with a scarlet body and a green head, I should have liked it better than Mrs. West's pale purple coat and motoring bonnet. I don't know how Sir S. felt about the surprise, but that was *my* feeling, though I was glad to see her brother. I find him the nicest thing about Mrs. West.

"Who would have thought of running against you?"

she exclaimed, as Sir S. jumped up from the table and shook hands as cordially as if there had never been that mysterious row. "We've come from Port Mary, where Basil sentimentalized over the stone Queen Mary stood on to get into her ship. We haven't the patience to make our notes before luncheon! We're *so* hungry, and there's such a lot to write about King David — *do* you think he built the Abbey, or was it Fergus, Lord of Galloway? — and all this architecture which interests Basil even when he's starving! We've brought our own sandwiches — we won't bother you ——"

Of course Sir S. and Mrs. James both protested that having them was a pleasure, not a bother. As for me, I remembered that little girls should be seen and not heard, so I said nothing, and ate the nicest cake for fear Mrs. West might get it. Sir S. gave his place at the table and his folding-chair to Mrs. West, and finished his luncheon, standing up, with Mr. Norman. After all, Mrs. West didn't seem to be hungry. She ate scarcely anything, and when Sir S. asked her to have some ice-cold white wine from the refrigerator basket, she said with a soft, sad smile, "'I drink to thee only with mine eyes.'" Then, suddenly, hers filled with tears, so they were liquid enough for a good long drink! She looked down again quickly, with a blush which gave her complexion a peach-like bloom; and Sir S. made haste to question Mr. Norman about the hired car. But I could see that he was embarrassed and distressed, and wondered more than ever what their quarrel was about. Sir S. wouldn't listen to me the first day, when I said it was my fault, and I oughtn't to go in his car. I'd almost forgotten that, it seemed so long ago;

but I remembered when I saw the tears in her eyes, and heard the strained sound in his voice. Even Mr. Norman didn't look happy. Mrs. James was the only one not affected. She ate her luncheon with a good appetite, which the sorrows of neither Mrs. West nor Queen Mary could take away from her.

When we had finished, Mrs. West asked Sir S. in a gentle hesitating way if he would mind explaining to her the beautiful Gothic doorway at the south side of the church. It was such a chance to find a great authority on architecture, like him, upon the very spot, for she and Basil were so ignorant, they always feared to make mistakes in their notes. Sir S. went like a lamb led by a chain of roses, but apparently Mr. Norman didn't feel the same need of expert advice. He stopped with Mrs. James and me, and helped us clear the table. When we'd packed everything up, he offered to take the basket to the car; and, as the others hadn't come back, I went with him, carrying the folding-chairs, which were not much heavier than three feathers.

"Have you remembered my advice?" he inquired. "Have you begun to write?"

"Yes, a little," I said. "What about your book?"

He shrugged his shoulders, looking melancholy.

"Won't the plot come right?" I asked.

"No. Nothing comes right."

"What a pity!"

"Yes, it's a pity. But I can't help it."

"Can't Mrs. West help?"

"She's not in the mood. Not that it's all her fault. Probably it's just as much mine. We're getting on each

other's nerves — and that's new to us. There won't be a book. There can't be a book as things are."

"Yet you're going on with your trip?"

"Oh, yes, we're going on with our trip. Aline wouldn't give that up."

"If it hadn't been for me," I said, "it would have been all right for you both. I feel a *beast!* I've spoiled everything."

"You're a witch, and you've bewitched us. Yes! That's what you have done."

"Thanks for your polite way of putting it," said I. "'Witch' is a nicer epithet than 'beast.' I wish — I almost wish — I'd never seen any of you!"

"I don't," said he. "And I don't believe Somerled does. To go back to the time when we didn't know that the witch-child existed would be going back from electricity to candles."

"You have a pretty way of poking fun at me," I laughed. "But I suppose you mean I've given you all a shock. Well, you'll soon be rid of me. Three days more, and the end! But I do wish I knew how to mend matters and make you and your sister happy again, at once."

"I could tell you how," he said quickly.

"Do, then! You've just time, if you hurry up before the others come."

He looked round, and there were Mrs. James and Mrs. West walking toward us with Sir S. They were very near.

He hesitated, and his face grew red. "Will you promise not to be angry?" he almost whispered.

"I promise! Tell me."

"If you want to make everything come right for everybody in a minute, you must turn your attention entirely to me."

"What good would that do?" I asked stupidly.

"It would do me all the good in the world, because, as I told you, you've bewitched me. It would do my sister good because — well, because she's particularly anxious for you to like me. And it would do Somerled good because — it might teach him his own mind — bring him to his senses."

"I don't understand one word you're talking about!" I broke out.

"It doesn't so much matter what you understand as what you do. Dear little Miss MacDonald, will you try and be very, very kind to me, for — everybody's sake?"

"Of course," said I. "But you must call me Barrie."

"Thank you! That's one step. Will you call me Basil?"

"If you like," I answered. "Basil and Barrie! Don't they sound nice together?"

Just then the others came up and heard what I said, which made me feel foolish, as they'd missed the first part. But Mrs. West beamed at me. I had been thinking that Basil Norman was the sort of man I should love to have for a brother, but Mrs. West as a sister I could *not* stand!

"Basil and Barrie *look* nice together too, don't they, Mr. Somerled?" she remarked.

"Very," said he dryly. And the next thing I knew was that she was sitting beside him on the front seat, and I was tucked in beside Mrs. James, with Basil Norman opposite. Their motor, it seemed, was not behaving well, and Aline

was nervous, so Sir S. had suggested, as we were all going on to Ayr, that they sould come with us for the rest of the day.

I felt rather dazed about everything, and I'm afraid made a hash of the scenery in my mind, until I had calmed down. I remember that we swept through Kirkcudbright, which was named for St. Cuthbert because his bones were once in the church. They were taking them on somewhere else, but I don't know why. Basil told us all about it; but it sounded so odd to hear him talking instructively of saints and Covenanters and martyrs, and "the torch of religion being first lighted in Galloway," after he had been begging me in a very different voice to "be nice to him," that it muddled up my intelligence. I liked the town because it was pretty, with graceful spires and lovely, ivied ruins; but I didn't care much about the saints, or even about the last Lord Selkirk, for whom they put up a Celtic cross in the Kirkcudbright market place; and I couldn't be bothered pronouncing Kirkcudbright correctly. Of course it's done in the last way you think it possibly could be, like all other Scottish names! I brightened up a little at the story of Paul Jones at St. Mary's Isle, because pirates are always nice, and he was classic. Besides, it was amusing of him to fail to kidnap Lord Selkirk and steal a silver teapot instead. To please Benjamin Franklin he gave the teapot back, so he didn't get much out of that adventure!

I remember too that there were hills on the way to Gatehouse of Fleet, hills which turned their backs and reared on their hind legs as we saw them in the distance; but always they knelt meekly in front of the Gray Dragon,

as if he beat them to their knees. They were not so accommodating to the hired car which followed. Something was the matter with its internal economy. It grunted and groaned and emitted evil-smelling fumes because it couldn't digest its petrol. Basil named the creature Old Blunderbore, but said he would not dare to call it so before its chauffeur-owner, who glared behind his goggles when it was blamed for anything.

Gatehouse of Fleet looked, according to Basil, like places in Holland, because sailing ships were apparently moving through fields, and masts mixing themselves up with tree branches. Suddenly we had plunged into Scott country, sandwiched in with Crockett, for Gatehouse is the "Kippletingan" of "Guy Mannering." There was a sweet, sad smell of the sea; and I heard Mrs. West ask Sir S. if it didn't remind him of "that last night on the ship, when we told each other things?"

About this time, I think it must have been, we began to see so many old castles dotted about the landscape that at last we almost ceased to notice them. It must have been nice living in one of those box-like fortress castles in old days, when all your friends had them too; so jolly and self-contained. And, as a matter of course, when you built one you had a few dungeons put in, just as one has plenty of bathrooms now in a big house. If you were of a dramatic turn of mind, you placed your dungeons mostly under your dining-hall, so you could hear the starving prisoners groan while you feasted comfortably. We passed several dear little towns, too, which I should like to have for toys, to keep in boxes when not playing with them. On

most of the houses were charming chimney-pots of different colours, exactly like immense chessmen, set out ready for a game. All the men in these towns looked almost ill with intelligence. Most of the girls were very pretty, with little coquettish features contradicted by saintly expressions, and even the dogs appeared well educated and intellectual.

At Newton-Stewart a change came over the houses, but not the people or animals. I felt that the smallest child would know more about books than I did; and there was hardly a nondescript face to be seen. All could be classified in historic Scottish types. But the whitewashed, thatched cottages in the suburbs would have looked Irish if they had not been too preternaturally clean. In the streets of Newton-Stewart there was not so much as a stray stick or bit of paper. It looked to me a deeply religious place, and Basil said perhaps it was trying to be worthy of St. Ninian, who first brought Christianity to Scotland. He was a native of the Solway shore, but went to Rome, where they liked him very much and made him a bishop. Then he felt impelled to convert his own people, so he sailed from France and landed at the island of Whithorn, which is now an excursion place from Newton-Stewart. That sounds irreverent, but, after all, an excursion is only a kind of pilgrimage; and even if people are catching fish or eating them, they can be pleased to be at the one place in Scotland where Christianity has gone on without interruption by Vikings or others for fifteen hundred years.

Then, besides, Newton-Stewart has a monument of Samuel Rutherford to live up to. And they ought to have

one of his namesake, Samuel Rutherford Crockett, who has done so much for Galloway.

It was in honour of his "Raiders" that we took the longest way to Ayr. Some of the best things in that book happened near Loch Trool, so we wanted to see Loch Trool. Bruce was there too; but this was a Crockett tour. We should have gone perhaps, even if the run had been dull, for it's only thirteen miles from Newton-Stewart, paradise of fishermen, to the hidden lake; but the thirteen miles turned out to be a panorama of beauty. Sir S. was surprised by its loveliness, though he knew by heart Burns's poem, "The Banks of the Cree." We did not come at once to the river; but from House o' Hill (delicious name!) we plunged into a wild, forgotten paradise. The road lay under an arbour of trees like an emerald tunnel, with a break here and there in the green wall to show a blue shimmer of mountains and hills in the distance. We seemed to have slipped into the hole leading to fairyland and pulled the hole in after us; but I knew I was not going to enjoy getting there as much as if my gray bonnet and coat had been on the front seat instead of Mrs. West's purple beauties. It was suddenly that we came into sight and sound of the river, and so deep was the stillness that we might have strayed into the haunt of a sleeping nymph. Nothing moved but the rushing brown water, and there was no sound, when we stopped to listen, but its joyous song and the humming of bees in bracken and heather.

Basil can "make believe" more easily and less stiffly than Sir S., because he is an author, and used to stringing whimsies together. He and I "pretended" that the bees were a fairy band, playing to a hidden audience in a

theatre roofed with the silver sheen of arching ferns. Wafts of perfume came to us, cooled in woodsy dells, or warmed on sunshiny banks of flowers; but not a soul could be seen anywhere, nor a house. We knew that this was an inhabited world only by the wires stretched across the river for the sending of letters and parcels.

Sunset-time had not nearly come yet, but already a silver slit was torn in the blue of the sky; and for the second time the heather moon was smiling its bright semicircular smile, as if to say, "Make the most of me, Barrie, *your* time is short!" Yet how could I make the most of her when I could see only my knight's back, with a purple shoulder as close to his as possible, and the heather moon was *ours?*

Suddenly Basil said, "Oh, there's your heather moon! I thought of you yesterday after it rose until it set, and wondered what you were doing. I do believe this *is* different from other moons. Don't you see, young as it is, how it has power to change the yellow of the sunlight, seeming to alloy it with silver?"

I did see, but thought I must have fancied the effect, until he saw it too. (We often think and see and say the same things, which is nice, but not so exciting as the society of a man who thinks different things and makes you argue.) The silver pouring down from that small crescent seemed to sift through the strong golden light in a separate and distinct radiance. It shimmered on the sea of waving hills and billowing mountains that opened out before us, as if sprinkling a glitter of sequins over the vivid green and amber and purple. Wherever there was shadow this pale glimmer painted it with ethereal colours, like the backs of rainbow fish moving under water. I might have jumped

out of the car and found the rainbow key, but nobody wanted it now!

"Just as that young, young moon has power to shine through the strong afternoon sunlight, so a girl may all in a moment throw her influence over a group of people older and more experienced than herself," said Basil, smiling at me, and then at Mrs. James, as if he didn't mind her hearing the flowery compliment.

"I don't know any such girl in real life," said I; "but you might work her up for your book."

"I shall have to put her in, if the book's to be written," said he.

By and by we came to the lake, or, rather, far above it; and Sir S. stopped the car to let us get out and look down. The water was a clear green with glints of purple, as if beds of heather grew underneath. There were jagged, bare rocks, and rocks whose shoulders were half covered as if with torn coats of faded brocade, dim silver of lichen, and pale pink of wild flowers. I hoped that Sir S. might join me for a look at the heather moon lying deep in the lake like a broken bracelet, but he didn't come. He looked at me very kindly from a distance, not coldly, yet not warmly, and he stayed with Mrs. West.

It was Basil who told me about Robert Bruce and his men hiding here, and rolling huge stones on the heads of the English soldiers who marched along the bank of the lake in search of the "outlaws." It seemed as if nothing terrible could have happened in so sweet a wilderness; but that was not the only horror. There were other wild deeds in history, and in the story of the "Raiders," memories of hunts for Covenanters, and great killings. But now all

is peace, and I should have thought Loch Trool forgotten by the world if, in a dell of birch, rowan, hazel trees, and great pines like green umbrellas, I had not spied a roof.

Sir S. said it was the roof of Lord Galloway's shooting-lodge, loved by its owner because it was "out of tourist zone." So much the worse for tourists! So much the better for Lord Galloway!

I should hate to think of the road to Loch Trool smoking with motor dust. Of course our own Gray Dragon's pure dust is a different matter!

As we ran out of Crockett land into Ayrshire we came into Wallace land; for every foot of Scotland is taken up twice over by something or somebody wonderful. There isn't an inch left for new history-makers. If we could see those "emanations" Sir S. talks of — those ghost pictures — as far as the eye could reach we should see men marching, splendid men and women, too, who have made the world shine with their deeds, processions coming from every direction, out of the dim beginning of things up to the present day.

After the wildness of Loch Trool we had a country of plenteousness and peace. Basil said it was like a Surrey set down by the sea, so I suppose Surrey has big trees and flowery hedges and rolling downs, purple with heather. But surely no heather can be as purple as Scottish heather?

The sands of Girvan seemed to float like a golden scarf on the blue sea, and the town looked a romantic, mediæval place till we shot into it. Then we were disillusioned as to its age; but Ailsa Craig was noble in the distance, and a few members of the gull colony had flapped over to give

town dwellers and visitors a sad serenade. "Gulls, golfers, and geologists all love Girvan," Basil said.

"Have you put that down in your notebook?" I inquired.

"Not in those words. But I jotted down something about this town in advance from authorities I've looked up. I generally keep two books going: one in which I put the things I want to see, and ideas for plots sometimes tangled up with a sort of diary; and another book of thoughts about places I have already seen — thoughts I can weave into a story in one way or another."

"You haven't once written in either of your books today!" I accused him.

"No. I told you I'd given up note-taking for the present. I'm all at sea. But just now it's a beautiful if not very calm sea."

"When it quiets down you'll begin again," I consoled him. "How I should love to see a real, live author's notebook! It would be so *useful* to know how you manage to — to ——"

"Record impressions," Mrs. James helped me out.

Smiling, Basil took from a breast-pocket a small green morocco volume with a pencil slipped into a loop. Compared to Mrs. West's pretty book, his was a shabby thing; but it smelt of good cigarettes.

"I'm afraid this will disillusion you," he said, "if you expect something interesting. I simply make notes of things I want to see, or jot down thoughts to recall pictures to my mind. Reading over one's notebook is like glancing over a lot of kodak films. Sometimes one sticks in a lot of nonsense."

I opened the little volume, and ran my eyes down the short pages. "Carlisle, Saturday, August Something or Other. Notes for Scotch Tour," I read aloud. "Story of honeymoon. English hero — American girl. Aline wants her Canadian. I see her American. Dispute. Must decide soon. Reading up Galloway makes me want to go there. Aline says rush straight on to Ayr, and save time. Hate saving time! Worst economy. More time you spend, more you have. Must go along coast of Ayr, anyhow. Once lined with strongholds of great families. See Dunure, Crossaguel, and deuced lot of others.

"Keats visited Burns's birthplace. Wrote sonnet there. Look this up.

"Burns sought out, along banks of Ayr, places where Wallace was supposed to have hidden. Good stuff this. Wallace fought all over the place here. At Irvine, one of his earliest exploits. Kindled big fire, neighbouring village. When English soldiers marched forth to put fire out, jumped on them and killed the lot. Stuffed bodies into dungeon of castle at Irvine. Called 'Wallace Larder' after that. Nasty larders people had in those days. Read up account Douglas Larder. Compare the two. See which worse. Why not call Barns of Ayr Wallace Oven? Read up Blind Harry for picturesque story Barns of Ayr. Far as I remember, English enticed all neighbouring Scots to powwow of some sort. Wallace expected; delay on way. Scots executed on some pretext. When Wallace turned up, niece warned him. He routed up few followers, set fire to barns and burnt English, who were celebrating triumph over Wallace and his men. When get to Ayr look this up further. . . . Word 'Whig' comes first

from Ayr. Wonder why? Look up. Also get Burns glossary. Dialect difficult. Aline won't read Burns. Fear she's going to fail in this book. Thinks only of one thing. But no matter. Courage, mon brave!

"Sunday. Had batch bad notices of last book from America. Aline gone to bed with headache as usual after bad reviews. Says we must economize. She'll forget when we start and want best suites of rooms with baths everywhere. I *know* that book was good. Hang notices! Understand so well what Job meant when said, 'Oh, that mine enemy would write a book!' He wanted to criticise it. Each new boil would suggest scathing epithet.

"Monday. Everything changed. Old plot exploded in thousand pieces. Mustn't be honeymoon couple. Heroine radiant young girl, eighteen, hair red as Circe's, eyes of new-born angel, comes like bombshell into hero's life. Not good simile, bombshell. Query, hero. Would she fall in love with man of B. N.'s type? I see another type more probable, but don't want that.

"August 4th. Fearful row. General upset. Don't see any book unless I write it alone. Aline says I can save situation for her. Would like only too well do what she wants, but difficult bring it off as things are. Chances in favour of other man. Temptation consent be cat's-paw. Is that fair to the lovely chestnut in the fire? Extra-ordinary that child like this can so upset us all. What is the electric attraction we can't resist? More than normal amount of radium, perhaps!"

"Well, why don't you laugh at the rattle of the dry bones?" asked Basil, as I read on, more and more puzzled.

"I haven't come to many funny things yet," said I,

"except about Job. That was rather good, though I don't see how you weave such things into your books."

"Job — Job?" he repeated vaguely. Then a rush of blood went over his whole face, up to his forehead. His dreamy dark eyes looked suddenly anything but dreamy. "Good Heavens!" he gasped. "What have you got there?" and began to ransack all the pockets of his waistcoat and coat until he found the twin of the book he'd given me. "This is what I meant you to see," he said in a queer, ashamed voice.

I handed the first book back to him. He seized it and glanced from page to page, looking almost ill. By and by he came to something which seemed to scare him. As far as I could tell, it was farther toward the end than I had read.

"Would you mind showing me where you left off," he asked.

"It was where you were wondering whether your new heroine had swallowed radium or something," said I.

"Oh!" He looked relieved. "Well — I wouldn't have had you see that idiotic stuff for a good deal. But I told you, didn't I, that if the book went on I'd have to put you into it? There's a lot of silly rot there. Poetical license!"

"The thing that made the most impression on me was the part about the red hair," I said. "The description sounded so nice. Who was Circe, please? Was she Scottish? It's a name a Pictish princess might have had."

"The first Circe lived even before the Pictish princesses," Basil answered, quieting down, though he was still very flushed. "But she's had a good many descendants — one

or two at least in each generation of women born in every country. Not that you — I mean the new heroine — will be one of them really."

"What did Circe do?" I hurried on.

"Do? She was an exceptionally attractive woman. She had a special kind of magnetism that nobody could resist. She amused herself by turning all the men she knew — there were quite a lot of them — into animals of different sorts."

"I think it would have been cleverer and more attractive of her if she had turned animals into men," said I.

"That's what *my* heroine can do," Basil explained. "She's a kind of miniature baby Circe, for her red hair and general get up, and her curious power of upsetting people and their plans from the first minute they see her. But — my heroine wouldn't and couldn't turn her victims into beasts. She makes them want to transform themselves into something very extra special in the way of manliness."

"Why do you call her *your* heroine with an emphasis?" I wanted to know. "Isn't she your sister's heroine, too?"

"No. My sister doesn't see her as a heroine for a novel. And that's why I say the book we started out to write won't materialize. No author can write a story he or she doesn't take a strong interest in."

"That's where my writing is easier," I said. "I just put down all the things exactly as they happen, and as I see and think about them. So there's no heroine — and no hero — and no story."

"Yes, that is simpler," he agreed. "That's the way the Great Author writes His book. Only all His char-

acters are heroes and heroines in the stories of their own lives."

As we talked, the moon went down in the west. The sky was a pale lilac, like a great concave mirror reflecting the heather. Then it darkened to a deeper purple, and made my thoughts feel like pansies, as they blossomed in my mind. We fell into silence. But Mrs. James said afterward that was because we were hungry and didn't realize what was the matter with us. Perhaps she was right, but it didn't seem so prosaic at the time.

As the car brought us near the town of Ayr (which, with its lights coming out, reddened the purple mirror) it was too dark to see details clearly. But, driving slowly, we were aware of a thing that loomed out of the quiet landscape and seemed strangely foreign to it, as if we were motoring in Greece or Italy, not Scotland. It was a great classic temple, rising on the banks of a stream that laughed and called to us through the twilight.

"Can it be somebody's tomb?" I asked. But there was no cemetery, only a garden, and close by a camel-backed bridge that crossed the surging river.

"It must be the Burns monument," said Basil. "I've never been here, but I've studied up the place and looked at maps till I can see them with my eyes shut. This is the right place for the monument, with a museum, and some garden statues of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnnie, which we'll have to visit by daylight to-morrow. I hope you're going to invite me to sight-see with you?"

"It's not for me to invite any one."

"Look as if you want to, and it's done."

"Oh, I'll do that!" I promised.

## VIII

WE STOPPED at a big railway-hotel when we came into Ayr. Basil and Mrs. West took rooms there too, because it was the best in town, and Mrs. West always wants the very best — except when she's depressed by bad notices of her books!

It was late, and she was so faint with hunger that she begged us not to dress, but to go to dinner in ten minutes. We agreed; but when we'd hurriedly washed our hands and faces and assembled at the rendezvous, there was no Mrs. West. Basil was the only one who didn't look surprised. Ten more minutes passed, perhaps, giving us time to think how hungry we were too, and then the lady appeared. She hadn't exactly dressed, but she had done something to herself which made her look fresh and lovely and elaborate, in contrast to Mrs. James and me.

"Dear people!" she exclaimed, "I'm so sorry if I've kept you waiting, but I simply couldn't find a *thing;* and the more haste, the less speed, you know. Mr. Somerled, you've been here before in your pre-American days. Do, like an angel-man, show me the way to the dining-room. I can never get used to going in late, with a lot of people staring. Basil will take care of Barrie and Mrs. James."

I felt as if I should go mad and bite something if she were to cultivate the habit of calling me "Barrie"; but as I'd invited both her brother and Sir S. to do so, and Mrs.

James had never called me anything else, I couldn't very well make Mrs. West the one exception.

A good many of the hotel guests had finished dinner by that time, but twenty or thirty were still at their tables in the big dining-room, which seemed to me absolutely palatial after my "glass retort." Evidently we were well in the thick of "tourist zone" again, judging by the look of the people, for most of them had the air of having travelled half round the world in powerful and luxurious motor-cars. You could see they weren't "local"— with four exceptions, our nearest neighbours. I thought they were pets; but Mrs. West stared in that pale-eyed way I noticed women have when they wish to express superiority or contempt.

All four of the pets were old — two very old, two elderly. The first pair wore bonnets which they must have had for years, things that perched irrelevantly on the tops of their heads, and looked entirely extraneous. The second two had something more or less of the hat tribe, and Sir S. said this was because their elders considered them girls, and granted them the right to be frivolous in order to attract the opposite sex. Mrs. West was sure that such headgear couldn't be got for love or money except in small remote Scottish towns. "Might come from Thrums," said Sir S. I'd never heard of Thrums, and Basil explained that it was a famous place in a novel, written by a man of my name, Barrie. "The real place is Kerrimuir," he went on, and promised to give me the book.

At this Sir S. glanced our way for an instant, looked as if he wanted to speak, changed his mind, and turned again to Mrs. West, next whom he sat, with Mrs. James on his

other side. No wonder, I thought, he liked better to look at her than me, as she was so fresh and elaborate and charming. All through dinner he talked to Mrs. West and a little to Mrs. James, leaving Basil to entertain me, which he did very kindly. Still, Sir S. seemed annoyed because a party of young American men at a table near ours stared at me a good deal, though he didn't care to pay me any attention himself. He drew his eyebrows together and glared at them once, whereupon the nicest looking of the four (and they were all good-looking) bowed. Sir S. returned the nod stiffly, with an "I-wonder-if-I-really-*do* know-you,-or-if-this-is-a-trick-to-claim-acquaintance?" sort of expression.

Perhaps I ought to have been annoyed too, but I wasn't a bit. They were *such* nice boys, so young, and having such a glorious time! I was glad they looked at me and not at Mrs. West, and I was sure they didn't mean to be rude. Probably they'd seen mother, or her photographs, and were puzzling over the resemblance which Sir S. and Basil both say is very strong, in spite of "marked differences." Whenever we speak of her, I feel as if I could hardly wait till Monday, though at other times the present seems so enchanting I can't bear to have it turn into the past.

The American boys (I thought that none of them could be over twenty-one) lingered at their table a long time after they seemed to have finished their dinner. They played some kind of game with bent matches which made them laugh a good deal; but the minute we got up, I heard them push back their chairs, though I didn't turn my head.

Basil and I walked out of the dining-room after the rest of the party, and the boys came close behind us. I heard one say in a low voice, "Did you ever see such hair?" and I felt a sort of creep run all the way down my plait and up again into my brain, because I've been brought up to think red hair ugly, and it's hard to believe every one isn't making fun of it. However, I remembered what Sir S. said about the flame-coloured heads of the children in the road, and that stuff Basil wrote in his notebook about Circe. Then I felt better, and hoped that the boys were not laughing.

Outside the dining-room door the handsomest one got near enough to speak to Sir S. "How do you do, Mr. Somerled?" he said. "Don't you remember me? I'm Jack Morrison, Marguerite's cousin. I met you twice at Newport while you were painting her portrait."

"Marguerite Morrison. 'M. M.,' the grateful model who gave him the refrigerator basket!" thought I. And Sir S. proceeded to give the cousin a refrigerator glance; but it didn't discourage him. He went on as cordially as ever. "My three chums want to be presented: Dick Farquhar, Charlie Grant, Sam Menzies. We're all Harvard men, seeing Europe in general and Scotland in particular, in our vacation. We've every one of us got Scottish blood in our veins, so we sort of feel we've earned the right to make your acquaintance. And we've been wondering if you'd introduce us to your friends, if you don't think it's cheek of us to ask!"

Sir S. looked as if he did think it great "cheek"; but if he hesitated, Mrs. West quickly decided for him. She gave the nice American boy one of her sweet, soft smiles,

and said, "Of course Mr. Somerled will introduce you all to us; or you may consider yourselves introduced, and save him the trouble. My name is Aline West, and this is my brother, Basil Norman."

She went through this little ceremony in a charming way, yet as if she expected the young men to be delighted; and I too thought they would burst into exclamations of joy at meeting celebrities. But not a word did any of the four say about the books, or their great luck in meeting the authors. Perhaps they were too shy, though they didn't seem shy in other ways. They just mumbled in a kind of chorus. "Very pleased to know you both" (which Mr. Norman told me afterward is an American formula, on being introduced); and when they'd bowed to the brother and sister and Mrs. James (though she hadn't been mentioned) all four grouped round me. This was natural, I suppose, because we were more or less of an age.

"Is this your daughter, Mrs. West?" asked Jack Morrison. "And may we children talk to her?"

For a minute that pretty, sweet-faced woman looked exactly like a cat. She did, really. It almost gave me a shock! I thought, "She must have *been* a cat in another state of existence, and hasn't quite got over it." Not that cats aren't nice in their way; but when ladies in fascinating frocks, with hair beautifully dressed, suddenly develop a striking family likeness to Persian pussies robbed of milk, it does have a quaint effect on the nerves.

"Miss MacDonald is *not* my daughter," said Mrs. West, laughing wildly. "I'm not *quite* old enough yet to have a daughter of her age, and she's not such a child as she looks.

But *do* talk to her, by all means. I'm sure she'll be very pleased."

"Then your name *is* MacDonald?" Jack Morrison exclaimed. "We were saying at dinner how much you look like Mrs. Bal MacDonald, the beautiful actress. Is she any relation?"

"Yes, she is," I answered. And I would have gone on to tell him and his friends that she was my mother, but I saw Sir S. and Mrs. West and Basil looking as if they wanted to get away, so I dared not go into particulars.

"Do tell us about it," said all the American boys together, when I paused to take breath and think. I should have loved to stop and talk about mother, but magnetic thrills of disapproval from my guardians crackled through me. "If you're in Edinburgh next week maybe you'll find out," I said consolingly. "But now I must go."

I bowed nicely, and they bowed still more nicely, trying to look wistful, as if they didn't want me to hurry away.

We went to a private sitting-room Sir S. had taken, so I suppose he had invited Basil and Mrs. West; and I thought they would speak of the American boys, but nobody even referred to their existence. This made me feel somehow as if I were being snubbed. I don't know why, for nobody was unkind.

Afterward, when Mrs. James and I went to our adjoining bedrooms, I asked her if I had done anything I ought not to have done.

"No, my dear child," said she, smoothing my hair, which I'd begun to unplait. "Nothing except ——" and she hesitated.

"Except what? Tell me the worst."

"There isn't any worst. You did nothing that Mrs. West and I wouldn't like to do, if we could. I won't go into particulars, if you don't mind, because it wouldn't be good for you if I did, and might make you self-conscious — a great misfortune that would spoil what some of us like best in you. But you needn't worry."

"Mrs. West looked as if she longed to scratch my eyes out. She needn't have been so *very* vexed at my being taken for her daughter. I'm not a scarecrow, or a village idiot."

Mrs. James laughed, a well-trained little laugh she has, which seems taught to go on so far and no farther — like the tune I once heard a bullfinch sing in a shop.

"My dear, you're too young and unworldly to understand these things," she said. "A pretty woman, a celebrity like Mrs. West, isn't pleased when she expects all the attention of young gentlemen for herself, to find that she goes for nothing, and all they want is to talk to some one else. And then, at her age, to be taken for a grown-up girl's mother! I couldn't help being sorry for her myself. I know what it is to want to keep young."

"But you're thinking of Doctor James," said I. "And she's a *widow*. Besides, she's always calling me a child, and telling me to play dolls."

"Well, that isn't to say that she wants all the men there are to play dolls with you," chuckled Mrs. James.

"These were boys, compared to her. She must be *thirty*."

"Maybe she's more, if the truth were known. But why should it be known? Even when we're thirty and — er — a little over — we like to be admired by boys as well as

others. It makes us feel we haven't got *beyond* things. Still, she needn't grudge you those lads. She's got the great Somerled."

"Yes, I suppose she has," I admitted grudgingly.

I went to bed feeling as if elephants had walked over me for years.

. . . . . .

Next morning Sir S. seemed to take it for granted that Basil would look after Mrs. James and me. He certainly put on rather a "kind uncle" air with me, but the more he did so, the less and less I felt as if he were my uncle, and the more and more I wanted to have him for my knight — mine all alone, without so much as a link of his chain armour for any one else.

It is strange, as I've thought often before already, how one can get to feel in such a way about a person one has known only a few days. But you see, *I've known Sir S. in a motor-car.* I do believe that makes a difference. Motor-cars vibrate, and you vibrate in them faster than you do when not in motor-cars; so your feelings travel much faster than they would in any other way. *That* must be the scientific explanation of what I feel for Sir S.

Here we were in Ayr, whither we'd come to think about Burns and nobody else (unless, perhaps, Wallace) and this was to be the beginning of a special little tour, following all along the line of Burns's pathway in life, from his birth in the town of Ayr, to his death in the town of Dumfries. We'd hurried through Dumfries almost with our eyes shut, on purpose not to see where he died, before he was born, so to speak; and I had thought all this

inspiration on the part of Sir S. I fancied that he had planned it partly for my sake, because of my being just out of the glass retort. But now he abandoned me to another; and seeing him entirely absorbed in Mrs. West kept me from dwelling on Burns as much as I ought. If you are to concentrate your mind on historical characters or poets, you must clear your brain out to make room for them, whereas mine was stuffed full of fancies about myself and other people, none of whom are historical at all yet — except, perhaps, the great Somerled.

Neither could Basil think exclusively of Burns, as we walked together through the pleasant town of Ayr, after our early breakfast. He was absent-minded once or twice, and when I said, "A penny for your thoughts!" he answered that they were of the book he would like to write but couldn't.

"The men I want to write about are boiling with primitive passions," said he, laughing, "and that won't do for a 'motor-novel.' Not that people who travel in motor-cars aren't mostly boiling with primitive passions for one cause or another, every minute. But the critics won't have it. According to them, characters can experience grand emotions only when they are keeping still, not when they're being hurled about the country. The proper place for primitive emotions is in small fishing villages, or, better still, on Devonshire moors, or, best of all, in the illimitable desert. So you see the men I have in my mind wouldn't go down with the critics, because unfortunately they happen to be in a motor-car."

Talking of men in motor-cars, at that moment an enormous red car, going very fast, changed its mind suddenly,

stopped short in twice its own length, and out jumped four men. They were the Americans of last night, and by this time I had mixed up their names (except Jack Morrison's, because he was so good-looking, with square blue eyes), but they labelled themselves over again very neatly for me. The freckled one was Dick Farquhar; the one with a moustache like the shadow of a coming event, Charlie Grant; the one with the scar on his forehead, Sam Menzies; but they had funny nicknames for each other. Afterward Basil said they made him feel as if his name ought to be Methuselah.

The boys had been going to Burns's birthplace in their motor-car, but they asked if they might walk round the town with us, and take to their auto later. I looked appealingly at Basil, for they were such fun, so he said, "Yes, of course"; and they were very polite, and called him "sir," as they had Mr. Somerled the night before. But each time they used the word, Basil looked as if he were swallowing bad medicine, and yet as though he were inclined to laugh. Presently, however, he went ahead with Mrs. James, following his sister and Sir S., and left me to the four boys. We laughed at everything. I'm afraid it wasn't at all the spirit to go hero-worshipping; and none of them knew anything about "The Twa Brigs" of Burns's poem. I should have liked to call Basil and ask him, but they said they should feel it would be money in their pockets never to have been born if I "shunted" them like that, so we laughed a great deal more and went on wallowing in ignorance. They seemed to take it for granted that I would rather be with them than with the others, and they paid me all sorts of funny compliments.

They vowed that they had resolved to change their whole trip because of me, and wherever I was going they would go too; so, just for fun, I would tell them nothing except that it was to be Edinburgh on Monday. Cross-question as they might, I would say no more than that they must find out my hotel, and how I was related to "Mrs. Bal" (as they all called her) for themselves, if they were to find out at all.

They knew little more about Wallace than Burns. When we stopped in front of the monument in the High Street, coming back from the Auld Brig, Jack Morrison began grandly with "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," but he could get no farther, and stopped to ask helplessly, "Where *did* he bleed, anyhow? Was it here, and if not, why did they put up the monument?'

Even I knew that Wallace was born in Ayr; and when I impudently inquired what they came to Europe to see, if they cared more about football than history, they all answered that they came to see pretty girls. "And, by Jove, we're doing it!" added Charlie Grant.

"Can't you find pretty girls at home?" I sneered.

"We have found 'em. We're looking for new types now," said Jack. "So's the great Somerled, isn't he? He told my Cousin Marguerite that he was going a long journey in search of a model with the right shade of hair, which was hard on her, poor girl, as she's spent a pot o' money on hers. But Somerled's a sardonic sort of chap, don't you think? They say his money's spoilt him. He hardly ever paints nowadays. Too busy grubbing for millions. I've heard that you have to go on your knees to get him to do a portrait — and if he graciously consents,

you can't tell but he'll bring out all that's most evil in your soul on to your face, like a rash. You never know what'll happen with him — except his fee. Nothing less than ten thousand dollars, if you get off cheap."

"I don't think he's that kind of a man at *all*," said I, "Why, just to prove to you that he isn't, he's offered to paint me for nothing!"

They all roared at this, and wouldn't explain why. I didn't like them much, for five minutes; but after that I couldn't help forgiving them again.

We took the Gray Dragon for Alloway and for Burns's birthplace, but the boys jumped into their car and kept close behind us. Hardly had we got into the tiny thatched house — once a mere "clay biggin" — where Burns was born, than the four appeared on the scene. Mrs. West was scarcely civil to them at first, until Basil whispered (only in fun, of course, but she took it seriously, as she often does when people think they're being humorous), "If you're nasty to those boys, it will be a bad advertisement. They won't read your books or tell their friends they're the best books going!" She was quite kind and elderly-sisterly to them after that. But nice boys as they are, it did grate on me having them make jokes every minute, even about that wonderful, pathetic little room with the railed-off furniture and curtained wall-bed.

Luckily I had been reading about the cottage and everything else concerning the Burns family while I dressed. I knew already how Burns's father built the tiny house with his own hands; how the night that Robert was born, a fearful storm came up which threatened to sweep away the whole biggin; and how the poor young mother had to be

hustled off to a neighbour's cottage. How little the poor couple guessed that the baby born "in thunder, lightning and in rain" would make of the clay biggin a world's shrine, to be bought by the nation for four thousand pounds. Maybe it cost five pounds to build. How I did want to believe that from one of the bowls kept on a shelf in that room of the wall-bed Burns had eaten his porridge as a child. Of course that would be almost too good to be true; but he did eat his porridge in that room, anyhow — and often wanted more than he could get. What brains of genius have been nourished on porridge and oaten cake in this country of ours! I felt more than ever proud of my Scottish blood as I stood in that low-ceilinged cottage; and I wondered if Sir S. had the same glorious thrill. I didn't know if he had ever before come to Ayr; but I did know that his first home on our own island of Dhrum must have been much like this — just a clay biggin with a but and a ben. He, too, was born a genius. He, like Burns, knew grinding poverty. He, too, was taken up by great ones and dropped again, for he has told me so.

Once Sir S. was near me for a minute — without his Aline — and I did want some word to prove that I was still his princess, he my knight. But all I got from him on the subject was: "Well, do you think the knights 'notice' that you're a princess?"

I stared, bewildered. Then I remembered our conversation in the car, before Mrs. West came and annexed the front seat. Of course I knew he meant the American boys.

"They notice that I'm like my mother," said I

"Oh, is that all?" And he laughed. Then Mrs. West flitted over to ask if we oughtn't to go to the museum.

It is a pathetic little museum, with intimate relics and countless pictures of Burns, each one making him look entirely different from all the others. By and by we went on to the monument, the strange classic temple that had loomed out of the twilight as we came to Ayr. The road from town to the monument was the way of Tam o' Shanter's wild ride, or almost the same; only there's a tram-line now to spoil the romance, if one chooses to let it be spoiled. As for me, I'd scorn to let romance be broken by an object so dull as a tram-car. When things are ugly I simply make them transparent for my eyes, and see through them as if they didn't exist.

I had to do a good deal of this juggling in the neighbourhood of the monument; for the booths bristling with Burns souvenirs, and the tea gardens where crowds drink to Burns's memory in ginger pop and fizzy lemonade, would be rather dreadful if they were not funny. I'm sure, though, Burns's sense of humour would make him laugh a mellow, ringing laugh if he could see those thousands of bottles of temperance drinks being emptied in his honour.

It was good to escape from the gay, meretricious gardens to the graveyard of Alloway Auld Kirk, where Tam o' Shanter's witches danced, and where Burns's father lies buried. There was peace, too, where the Brig o' Doon arched its camel-back over a clear brown, rippling stream. There, through the singing of the water, through the playing of an old blind fiddler scraping the tune of "Annie Laurie," I could hear the true Burns song, the music of his thoughts sweetly ringing on, to keep the world young,

as the bright water leaps on forever to give its jewels to the sea.

We went back from Alloway to Ayr, and lunched early in our own hotel. The boys lunched early too, and when we started out on the next stage of our Burns pilgrimage, we saw their red car panting in front of the hotel. I had heard no talk of new plans for Basil and Mrs. West, but they must have talked things over with each other or Sir S., for Blunderbore was vibrating healthily between the Gray Dragon and the Red Prince. I could have jumped for joy when I saw Blunderbore, and kissed him on his bonnet. Already in imagination I was in my old place on the front seat of our car, beside my knight; but the first words of Sir S. snatched me off again and left me dangling in mid-air.

"Sure your motor's all right again?" he inquired of Basil.

I held my breath for the answer.

"Yes, thanks, quite all right."

"You know" — and Sir S. turned to Mrs. West — "we're delighted to keep you as our guests."

"You *are* good," she answered, "but — we mustn't wear out our welcome."

"Don't be afraid of that." (I did so wish I could have been sure whether his tone was eager or only cordial! Probably Mrs. West was wishing the same.)

"Thanks a thousand times, but we'll sample our own car for a while. We shall meet and exchange impressions. And perhaps — after Edinburgh ——"

She broke off, leaving the rest to our imagination. Mine was so lively that it gave my heart a pinch. I could

see what she meant as clearly as if she had held a photograph before my eyes: me, with mother, waving good-byes from a hotel door; she and her brother transferred permanently to the Gray Dragon, the Row forgotten; Blunderbore's nose turned meekly back toward Carlisle; Mrs. James out of the picture. Just for an instant I could have cried. Then I reminded myself for the twentieth time that in a few days *nothing* can matter, because I shall have my own dear, beautiful mother, who will make up to me for everybody and everything else.

I don't know how I should have borne it if Mrs. James had wanted to sit in front, but the angel didn't. And presently there was I in my old place, feeling as if weeks instead of hours had elapsed (yes "elapsed" is the most distance-expressing word) since I last sat shoulder to shoulder with Sir S.

That feeling of long-ago-ness made me a little shy, and to save my life I couldn't think of a word to say except about the weather; so I said nothing at all, and he said the same. By and by I began to count. When I had got up to five hundred, and still he hadn't spoken, I knew I should certainly burst if nothing happened before a thousand.

"Well?" he murmured at last in an isolated way.

"Five hundred and eighty-six," I counted aloud inadvertently.

"Eh?" said he.

"I was just seeing how many I should have to count before you spoke."

"H'm! I'm afraid you do find me a dull companion after all your latest acquisitions. But what can I do? In

a way I'm your guardian temporarily. I can't let you run about the country alone with hordes of young men. I may seem selfish; but I have done my best for you since other and younger knights came upon the field."

"That *is* hypocritical!" I flung at him. "You shed me on others because you like the society of a grown-up woman better than mine; and then you pretend you're doing it for my sake. I *like* that!"

"I thought you would like it. That's why I did it."

"Not because you wanted to talk to Mrs. West?"

"Oh, of course I like talking to her. Don't you like talking to her brother, and all that drove of boys?"

"Why — yes, I like talking to them well enough, but ——"

"But what?"

"You ought to *know*, without telling."

"I don't know. Are we playing at cross purposes?"

"How can I tell, if you can't?"

"How can I, if you *won't?*"

"Oh, don't let's argue about nothing! Let's be happy — perfectly happy."

"In other words, if milk has been spilt, don't water it with salt tears, but leave it to collect cream."

"Yes. Why doesn't everybody treat spilt milk like that?"

"It doesn't occur to poor worried humanity. It wouldn't occur to me in other society — Princess."

"Thank you, Sir Knight." I couldn't resist nestling my shoulder closer to his in joy and gratitude: and then an odd thing happened. A tiny shock of electricity seemed to flash through his shoulder to mine. I never felt any-

thing like it before. It made my heart stop and afterward beat fast. I had to talk of something irrelevant in a hurry, so I grabbed at Burns: and indeed we ought not even for a minute to have talked of any other subject on this road, which we were exploring only because of Burns. Not that the high road between Kilmarnock and Dumfries wouldn't be worth seeing if Burns had never set foot on it, and if no other great ones had passed that way. It would be worth travelling for itself alone, for every mile has its own special beauty. And the more I think of Scotland the more I tell myself she is like a wise connoisseur (I hope that's the word!) who goes ahead of others to a sale of splendid pictures, and secures the finest for herself at a bargain. Several of the prettiest pictures hang on the blue-and-gold walls of the Burns country.

We came suddenly into view of Arran when the car had spun us along an up and down road to Ochiltree and Cumnock. It was I who, looking back, first caught sight of the jagged pinnacles boldly painted in purple on a far, pale sky. I didn't know what they were, but Sir S. put on the brakes quickly, and let us stop to look. He remembered the cliffs, and gazed at them with a light in his eyes which would have told me, if I hadn't known before, that he had been homesick for Scotland all these rich, successful years, whether consciously or not.

By and by we came to the Nith, which afterward we did not leave; and through a green glen wound the "sweet Afton" Burns wrote of and loved almost as dearly as he loved its elder brother. Here in this valley, companioned with his own starry thoughts, he walked and rode, happy in his fellowship with Nature, even though poverty made

him an exciseman at fifty pounds a year. He had to put down smuggling with one hand and write his glorious poetry with the other, as Mrs. James expressed it. At New Cumnock he would spend a night sometimes on his way to Ellisland, his "farm that would not pay," near Dumfries.

Always following in the track of Burns, the Gray Dragon dashed up and down short, steep, switchbacked hills (which must have tried any steed of ancient days except a witch's broomstick) and whisked us into Sanquhar, the "sean cathair" or "old fortress" of earliest Gaelic times, now snappily called "Sanker." There Queen Mary rested, going to Dundrennan after the terrible battle of Langside; there Prince Charlie marched; and there was a monument of granite to the Covenanters Cameron and Renwick. Burns must have dreamed of Queen Mary when duty brought him to Sanquhar; and Renwick would have been a person to appeal to him, because of his youth and good looks, and because the "pretty lad" was the last martyr to the Covenant. But perhaps he thought most of all of that Admirable Crichton who was born at Sanquhar, not in the castle of his wild and brilliant family, but at Eliock House. Burns would maybe have liked him not so much for taking his degree at St. Andrews when he was twelve, or for knowing ten languages and many sciences, as for wandering adventurously over the world, winning tilting matches at the Louvre, and the love of ladies at Padua and Venice.

Mrs. James had bought a book with quotations from a diary of Burns, and she read out to us while the car stopped at Sanquhar what he had written about one specimen day:

"Left Thornhill at five in the morning. Rode four miles to Enterkinfoot and made a call: thence three miles to Slunkerford with another call: thence six miles to Sanquhar, where there were twenty official visits to be made: thence two miles to Whitehall, with two more calls: and a return journey to Sanquhar, finishing the day's work at seven in the evening."

Poor poet. But he had always his glowing fancies to keep his heart warm. We felt almost guilty because we had no horrid calls to make, as he had; nothing to do but enjoy the scene made magical by his love of it: the valley with its near green hills and distant peaks of Galloway and Lowther; the river girdling wooded reaches with a belt of silver, or burrowing through deep rocky channels, purple as heather petrified. It was all as different from yesterday's Crockettland as if we had crossed the ocean from one to the other.

At Carronbridge we saw the woods of Drumlanrig on our right hand; and Sir S. told me about the Duke of Queensberry who spent all his money in building the splendid castle, slept in it one night, saw the bills for it, cursed himself and it, and went away with nothing left but a broken heart. "Deil pyk out the een of him who sees this," he wrote on the back of the biggest bill.

There's a Burns museum at lime-tree-shaded Thornhill, but I refused to go in and stare at an original cast of his skull. I do think a man, especially a great genius, ought to be allowed the privacy of his own skull!

Closeburn is the place where the Kirkpatricks, the Empress Eugénie's family, used to live before they went to Spain. At Auldgirth we went over a bridge built by

Carlyle's father. At Mauchline Burns grew from a boy into a man and fell in love. At Ellisland, Burns lived for a long time with his handsome wife, Jean Armour. At Dalswinton the first steamboat made its first trip, and Burns was on it. All round us now was Scott's "Redgauntlet" country; and the bridge crossing the Nith at Dumfries was built by Devorgilla. There was something to see and think of every minute; and in fifty-nine miles we had followed Burns's whole life-story on its slow way from Ayr to Dumfries. Only — we couldn't follow his thoughts to the stars!

We had stopped many times; still it wasn't yet five o'clock, and we had time to see all that's sacred to Burns at Dumfries, the "Fair Queen of the South," as Sir S. called it, quoting I don't know what.

First we went to the house in Bank Street where Burns came when he left Ellisland, and had seventy pounds a year to live on instead of fifty — a sad and grim little house, where in the wee closet that was his study we could hear the music of the Nith, but catch no sparkle of its water. He had hardly air enough to fan the fire of genius, yet it went on turning brightly because nothing could put it out. If it was a sad house to live in, it must have been even sadder to die in. He'd have liked his last look to be on sky and meadow, or he would not have said in his "Song of Death":

> "Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
> Now gay with the broad setting sun.
> Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties!
> Our race of existence is run."

I found those words in the Poems bound in tartan which

Basil had bought for me in a fascinating bookshop at Ayr and I read them in the room where the poet died. Afterward I was glad to see in St. Michael's churchyard a great many of the "loves and friendships" resting near him in his long sleep. Their presence consoled me for the mausoleum which nobody can admire nowadays, or think worthy of him. Almost, I would rather have had him lie under one of those strange, enormous tombstones like stone cupboards or tables which clutter the graveyard.

While we were trying to find the burial-place of Napoleon's doctor, and some martyrs and cholera victims Mrs. James was interested in, Mrs. West and Basil appeared, and then the Americans. Sir S. looked horribly bored when he saw the four tall, brown, nice-looking boys, and asked me quite fiercely if I'd given them permission to follow us every step of the way. I snapped back, "No, of course not!" And immediately he said, "Forgive me. If you had, after all where would be the harm?"

There was no time for more. We had to say, "How do you do?" to Basil and Aline; and then the boys surged round us, in their high spirits rather like big Newfoundland puppies sacrilegiously racing each other among the graves. They had been reading up history on purpose to please me, they announced, and were ready to bet five pounds against a glove that they knew more than I did. Was I aware that Dumfries meant "fort in the thorn bushes?" Had I learned that the British Christian chief, who was the real King Arthur, fought with pagan Saxons all along the Nith. Did I know it was in Grayfriars, or the Minories Church, that Bruce killed the Red Comyn, Devorgilla's grandson?

They won the glove; and then there was a scene when

they took a penknife and cut it up in four pieces, one for each man. I tried to keep them from being so foolish, but might as well have tried to stop the wind from blowing; and it was no wonder that Mrs. West turned her back on us rather than see those dreadful boys ostentatiously stowing away the bits of gray kid in what Jack Morrison called their "heart-pockets."

I was afraid Sir S. might think it was my fault, their coming to stay at the pretty hotel he'd chosen for us because it overlooked the river; but it wasn't a bit. It was just as much a coincidence as Mrs. West and Basil finding three Canadian friends already there — perhaps even *more* of a coincidence; for it didn't seem to me that Mrs. West was really astonished at finding these people at a Dumfries hotel, or they at finding her and Basil. I was there when they met in the hall: two rather handsome dark men, brothers, named Vanneck, and the fair, thin little wife of the younger one. All they said at first was, "Well, this *is* nice! How do you do?" And it struck me afterward, when I thought it over, that if it had been a great surprise, they would have mentioned it. I wondered if they hadn't corresponded and arranged it somehow, for they appeared to know each other very well, and to be the best of friends, especially the elder Mr. Vanneck and Mrs. West, who called each other "Aline" and "George." After dinner it turned out that she had been inviting the Vannecks to go on to Melrose and Edinburgh in Old Blunderbore, without consulting the chauffeur-owner of the car. He thought the load, with extra luggage, too heavy for Blunderbore's powers; consequently Mrs. West threw herself on the mercy of Sir S. She asked if the Gray Dragon

could take Basil, and the Gray Dragon's master quietly said yes.

After Mrs. West had walked with Sir S. in the churchyard of St. Michael's, he seemed very thoughtful and a little gloomy, even stiff in his manner with me. At first I felt it must be that she had said something to change him toward me, but again I told myself that that was a silly and far-fetched suspicion. It was more likely that he disapproved of my "larking" with the American boys and giving them a glove to divide in bits. Afterward, too, when they turned up at our hotel, he might easily have thought I'd encouraged them to follow us again.

I hoped for a chance to put that idea out of his mind, but next morning, starting for Melrose, Vedder had the place next Sir S., and Basil, Mrs. James, and I were all three together behind.

We started before Aline West and her friends the Vannecks (her special one is a widower, very rich, who has proposed several times, she told Mrs. James); but the four boys waited for us to get off again, so they might know where we were going; and I began to be almost angry, because of the wrong impression their nonsense was making on Sir S. It had been so good to get him back yesterday that it was worse than ever so see him slipping quietly away once more.

If it hadn't been for these worries, it would have been a wonderful day.

From Dumfries we ran up and down nice scallopy hills, crossing the Annan at a place named Beattock, for Moffat, where there are sulphur wells a girl discovered two hundred years ago, and made the fortune of the town. Then there

was a lovely road along Moffat Water, with a succession of wild green dells and hillsides cleft with fern-choked ravines. Still we were in Burns's country, for by Craigie Burn lived Jean Lorimer, to whom he wrote love-songs; and a little farther on was the scene where "Willie brewed a peck o' maut." The next bit of beauty was associated with the Ettrick Shepherd (I can't bear to think of his name being Hogg), for he wrote a Covenanter story, "Brownie of Bodesbeck," about a mountain we could see hovering in the distance.

All Moffatdale looked a haunt for fairies, so no wonder it is cram full of legends; and if I had been sitting with Sir S. I should have begged him to stop and let us scramble up a rocky path to the haunt of a pale spirit disguised as a waterfall. The Gray Mare's Tail is a disguising name, too, for there is nothing gray about it, but all white as streaming moonlight; and Sir S. and I together might have stood a good chance of finding the rainbow key, sparkling on some cushion of irridescent spray. We missed the chance, however; and who knows if it will ever come again?

Basil had bought a volume of Scott's poems for me, to match the Burns's and he found in "Marmion" — where he knew it existed — a verse about the torrent:

> Issuing forth one foamy wave,
> And wheeling round the Giant's Grave,
> White as a snowy charger's tail
> Drives down the pass of Moffatdale.

So already we were coming into Scott's country.

I remember Birkhill, because it's the watershed between the Moffat and the Yarrow, and the word "water-

shed" goes through my mind with a musical white rush, like a cataract. It suggests beautiful faraway things. Besides, there's another reason for remembering. Close by, at Dobbs Linn, the Covenanters used to hide in the time of the great persecution.

We swept through some bare, bleak country before coming to the Yarrow, but the rover brought us back to gentle, cultivated land, with thoughts of her favourite Wordsworth for Mrs. James; and soon we came to a very famous place, Tibbie Shiels's Inn. I had never heard of it, but that doesn't take from its fame! Basil and Mrs. James could both tell me how Scott, and Christopher North, and De Quincey, and a long list of other great men, used to meet at the house kept by Mrs. Richardson, "Tibbie," who outlived all the noble company, and was buried at last in the same churchyard with the Ettrick Shepherd.

By and by our road dropped down and down to the shores of lonely St. Mary's Loch (Scott wrote of it in "Marmion"), and at the end of the still lake to Dryhope Tower, where brave Mary Scott, his ancestress, "The Flower of Yarrow," had her birthplace.

So we went on to Selkirk on its hill overlooking Ettrick Water, and stopped just long enough to buy some of the celebrated "bannocks" for our picnic luncheon later on, and to have a glance at the statues of Sir Walter Scott and Mungo Park, the African traveller. Basil pretended to be shocked because I had never heard of him! "And you had never heard of Aline and me till you met us," he sighed, shaking his head. "I suppose you never heard of the sutors of Selkirk, either? The burly sutors who

'firmly stood' at Flodden when other 'pow'rful clans gave way'? Well, I'm glad, anyhow, that we aren't the *only* people you'd never heard of!"

Basil seemed very happy, and kind, and *understanding*, somehow, as if he saw that something was not quite right with me, and he wanted to console me as well as he could.

Sir S. had managed very clearly about not letting us stop to look at the town of Burns's death until we'd seen the place of his birth and traced out the path of his life-story; but he couldn't contrive the same kind of trip for Sir Walter Scott's country without going over the whole road twice. Besides, he wanted us to see Melrose by moonlight, and said it would be "imcomparably better than Sweetheart Abbey." But I knew it wouldn't be better for me, and I didn't quite forgive him for thinking it possible, now that we had got so mixed up with irrelevant people.

We had to go to Jedburgh first, the place farthest south; then to Dryburgh; then flashing through Melrose to Abbotsford, where Scott died as well as lived; and then back to Melrose for the night. That was his plan; and I still supposed that we were to go on somewhere else next day — Sunday — not arriving in Edinburgh till Monday. But it seems that Sir S. had made up his mind to a different programme, though he said nothing about it then.

Things happened to the boys' car on the way to Jedburgh, though the road was good, and only undulating. Basil said that, as a matter of fact, he had "ill-wished" them and their auto, and as "thoughts are things," he had created the nail on which their tire came to grief. "Somerled and I want to be the only ones," he added mys-

teriously. "We'll have no interlopers." Which would have made me think him rather a frivolous person, after all, if he hadn't been so well up in the lore of the road, and known so many interesting things about Jedburgh, the county town of Roxburghshire.

"If we curse a mere nail on a white velvet road-surface nowadays," said he, "think what the roads must have been like when Jedburgh had a royal castle, and kings and queens were travelling about from one of their houses to another! Think what Queen Mary must have had to endure, even bringing things down to modern times, comparatively. She stayed in Jedburgh town, in an old house in Queen Street — came for assizes, I think. Then, while she was there, bored to death, she heard that Bothwell was 'sick of a wound' at Hermitage Castle, over twenty miles distant. In an hour she was on her palfrey and off to see him, falling into a morass on the way. But she got back again that night, rather than her good subjects should say she neglected their affairs. She fell ill with fever after her exertions. What wouldn't she have given for a motor-car? But how she would have been bumped and bruised if she'd had one, though the roads were grand then compared to the state they'd fallen into after the Romans marched out of Scotland. Imagine the early kings and queens with their processions passing where we pass now; and armies returning from battle with their prisoners; and bands of pilgrims going to some sacred shrine; and robber hordes moving at night; and wild-beast shows on the way from one fair to another. Can't you see the panorama?"

I could, easily, picture after picture. But when you

come to think of it, he'd mentioned nothing as curious as motors, which we take quietly for granted, just as our forefathers took the wild beasts and the robbers.

We had a glimpse of Burns's "Eden scenes on crystal Jed," though only enough to be aggravating, for Basil said there were prehistoric caves, and scenery enough to make a journey to Scotland worth while, if one came for nothing else. But people in motor-cars never seem to turn aside for anything. They go toward their destination like creatures possessed. So, although Jedburgh is supposed to be the most historic town of the Lowlands, we hardly looked at it in our haste to see the Abbey, and to rush on to other Abbeys — a dayful of Abbeys! Not that Jedburgh put itself out to attract us. It had rather a grim air as a town, as if it hadn't quite forgotten the fierce slogan of the Jedburgh men, who shouted "Jethart's here!" as they wielded the terrible Jethart axes invented by themselves. And one isn't allowed to go inside Queen Mary's house to see the tapestry her ladies worked.

I wished to think no abbey so beautiful as Sweetheart Abbey, which was my first, and seen on the first night of the heather moon; but I had to tell myself that Jedburgh was lovelier, in its garden on the river-bank. Dreaming of its own reflection, its hollow, window-eyes could see, deep down under a glass, all its own history and legends preserved forever as in a crystal casket; the story of saintly King David who built it, and of the French friars who left their own Abbey at Beauvais to people it; better still, of the wedding with the spectre guest — the marriage of little French Jolette to Alexander, the last of the Celtic kings. Perhaps, too, the window-eyes peering into the

crystal could see the figure of Sir Walter Scott, seeking and finding inspiration in the Abbey's old tales.

Basil, who told me the stories, read in a book that "Jedburgh is completer than Kelso or Dryburgh, and simpler and more harmonious than Melrose," so when the four boys appeared at last in Dryburgh Abbey, having calmly missed out Jedburgh and Kelso to save time, I used the criticism as if it were original, with great effect; for by that time *we* had made a side dash to see lovely Kelso, where Sir Walter went to the Grammar School, and met Ballantyne, who long afterward published his novels and brought about his bankruptcy. I heard also, read out from the same book, that the stone of Dryburgh was taken from the quarry that built Melrose, and that the name Dryburgh meant "Druid." Even the boys, I think, could hardly help feeling the mysterious, haunting charm of the place, which was as strange and secret as if the dark yew trees and Lebanon cedars guarding the ruins were enchanted Druid priests. There was a Druid urn, too, which looked as if it knew all the secrets of the ages, and had held sacrificial blood.

I could imagine Sir Walter Scott coming to Dryburgh again and again, and loving the hidden spot so well that he wanted to sleep his last sleep there. Such a peaceful sleep it must be with the Tweed singing out of sight, and yews old as legend to play lullabies upon their own harp-strings when the wind touches their dark, rustling sleeves.

The song of the Tweed at Abbotsford was the song of Inspiration, changing to the song of Fulfilment in the master's passing hour. Now, at Dryburgh, the river veils itself like a mourner, and its song is the Sleep Music

which has in it the secret of death and of life beyond. I stood for a minute alone in front of the tomb where Sir Walter's body lies with those he loved best, in the place he loved best, and transparent green shadows like the spirits of shadow hid me from the sunlight. While I shut my eyes, I could understand the message of the song. And I knew that if my knight had been with me it would have come to him in the same way, because we are both of the land where the old, old secrets of wind and waves and rock are in the blood of the people, and sung by their bards. It is perhaps the mysterious kinship of far-off ancestry which draws me to him, and tells me that we two belong together — that others stand outside as strangers.

Just then I felt that it would have been worth the bother of being born only for the sake of that minute, if I had no other minutes worth living; and it seemed that some knowledge was coming back to me which souls forget as bodies grow up to manhood or womanhood. But suddenly Basil's voice broke the Music. "You look as if you were conjuring up the White Lady of Avenel, who will come to any one who knows how to call her, here at Dryburgh," he said. And I opened my eyes as if he had jerked me back by the arm from the days of the Druids to the era of motor-cars. And so he had — by the ear, not the arm. If Sir S. had spoken to me then it would have been different. I begin to think he is going to be the only Real Man in my world. But if I find that out, and he doesn't think me the only Real Girl, what will become of me?

After we had done what Mrs. West, in her pretty little tinkling voice, called "exhausting Dryburgh" (as if one could!) we went to Melrose, only four miles away, to leave

our luggage at a nice hotel and take rooms for the night, before going on another mile and a half to Abbotsford. I little thought what a surprise I should have by and by, owing to this plan of action mapped out by Sir S.

The next thing that happened to us was seeing the many turreted house built by the "Wizard of the North," when his wish was to found a great Border family. He didn't realize then that he was founding a great school of romance and that all the world would be his family in mind and heart.

A book Basil had, said that the house was "ill-placed," but to me that seemed a dull and unimaginative criticism. Nowadays people may think a great deal about wide views from their windows; and if I ever build a house with a fairy wand, that's what I shall choose to have myself. But perhaps in Sir Walter's day the thing most sought for was a peaceful, sheltered outlook all to yourself and your family, like a secret garden of which only you had the key. Just such an outlook the Wizard had from his windows; and of course what he most wished for was to bring the singing Tweed into his secret garden, just as you coax a lovely wild bird, if you can whistle its own notes, under the trees it loves.

Perhaps if Sir Walter had not been able to look out over his flowers and hay-scented meadows to the friendly river, inspiration might have failed him in his troubles. But, you see, he had that secret garden of his soul; and when he was there it must have walled him into a region of peace where worries could do no more than knock at the door.

Wandering over the big house with Mrs. James and Basil (the boys in the background), I was glad, glad that Sir

Walter had owned so many treasures, and collected so many curiosities; yet I felt an undertone of sadness even in the library (where the twenty thousand books are, given back by those decent bodies, his creditors), a sadness like that which must have pressed on his spirit, thinking of all the money he had paid for his home, and the beautiful things in it — all the money he would have to make out of his brain to clear away the debt. "When I do build my house, I shall have a gallery like this in the library," I said, thinking Basil was close behind me, as he had been; but instead, there was Sir S. standing silently by. Basil had gone into the study, or perhaps into the tiny "Speak a bit," to look at the wall-panelling taken from Queen Mary's bed at Jedburgh.

"That's just what I was thinking about my library," Sir S. answered, as if I had spoken to him.

"Haven't you got one yet?" I asked.

"Only an embryo library in a flat in New York — a rather nice flat. But a flat isn't home. And you know — you ought to know — the house of my heart is on a far-away island."

"The island of Dhrum?"

"Yes. I've just begun to realize that I never have had and never can have a real home out of the Highlands. Would you think me an interloper — you and the other grand MacDonalds — if I, the crofter's boy, should develop an ambition like Sir Walter's — oh, not so worthy or splendid, because *I'm* neither worthy nor splendid — if I should wish to have the great house of the MacDonalds of Dhrum, not let to me for a term of years as it is now, but bought and paid for as my own?"

"Can the MacDonalds sell?"

"Yes, and will, if I'll pay his price. You see, he has no son, only a daughter; and she, having failed to bring off a match or two ——"

(I didn't let my eyes twinkle, or my face do that weird thing, "break into a smile"; but Jack Morrison told me that Miss MacDonald had "set her cap at the great Somerled," and torn it off and stamped on it in rage because — this is Jack's slang — Sir S. "wasn't taking any.")

—"Having failed to bring off a match or two, has settled down into old-maidhood. She's an enthusiastic suffragette, and hates living out of London. The Mac of D. considers his club his castle, or a good deal better; and as he's the last of the line — not a male heir, no matter how distant — he can do as he likes with his ancestral stronghold. You know, I suppose, your father was born at Dunelin Castle?'

"Yes," I said. "I wish I'd been born there, instead of at Hillard House."

"So do I wish it. If you had been, I should have no hesitation in — er — in building the gallery round the library wall."

"You think you really will decide to buy the castle?" I asked breathlessly.

"Sometimes I think so. At other times I think, *Qui bono?* I say to myself that I shall never have a home, or an incentive for settling down. But come along and look at Sir Walter's treasures before any one else appears."

"Where's Mrs. West?" I asked involuntarily.

"She's annexed your bodyguard for the moment — do you mind?— appealed to their innate love of horrors by

showing them the picture of Queen Mary's head, painted an hour after her death by a brother of Margaret Cawood, her attendant. Suddenly I felt that, if Basil could spare you to me for ten minutes, I should like to be the one to show you a few things — the things I loved best when I came from Edinburgh to Abbotsford with a bit of the first money I ever earned by my brush."

I turned on him, opening my eyes wide. "Basil spare me!" I echoed scornfully. "I'm not his princess, even if you don't want me for yours."

"I do want you. But ——"

"Oh, here he comes!" I whispered, shrill as a cricket. "Take me to see *your* things, quickly."

So we ran away from Basil, and I had one of the happiest hours I have ever lived through; although the sight of Sir Walter's neat clothes in the glass case — the thick-soled boots, the broad-brimmed hat that covered his thoughts, the coat that covered his heart — brought tears to my eyes.

Next best, I liked the bit of Queen Mary's dress, the pocket-book worked by Flora MacDonald, Prince Charlie's "Quaich" — the cup with the glass bottom to guard the drinker against surprises — the ivory miniatures Sir Walter and his French bride exchanged, and the Rob Roy relics. Perhaps it is odd, but they were the very things Sir S. had remembered most affectionately. Last of all he showed me a toadstone amulet set in silver, a charm to prevent and ward off the spells of fairies. "If I could have had a thing like this to carry about with me in my motor-car," he said, "I should perhaps have been safe. But it's too late now."

He smiled at me with that whimsical yet kind smile which is the only sort he ever gives me since Mrs. West and Basil and the boys came. Before their day, there was a different look in his eyes. I can't tell what that difference was, but I liked the old look a thousand times better than the new, which makes me feel I may as well go into a convent. Not that I intend to do so!

Just then Basil came to say that his sister and the Vannecks were going, as Aline was tired; and would Sir S. tell her what time we were to see the Abbey. Basil and I were left together — quite as usual, lately. He made some rather nice poetical remarks about the house at Abbotsford: how marvellously it expressed the personality and tendency of Sir Walter's mind; and how it seemed to him that here was the true heart of Scotland embalmed in spices and laid in a shrine, just as Robert Bruce's heart lies at Melrose. I hardly listened, though, for I was wondering so much what Sir S. would have gone on to say about the amulet if Basil had let us alone a minute longer. But fairy fancies were in the air, in one form or other. As we walked up the narrow path which would bring us to the motor, Basil told me a dream he'd had the night before. "I thought," he said, "that I was a humble reincarnation of Thomas Ecildoune — Thomas the Rhymer — and that I was walking in the Rhymer's Glen — it isn't far out of this neighbourhood, you know — when a Vision in a magic motor-car came sprinting down the steep curve of a rainbow. In front of my feet, the Vision contrived to stop the car, or in another second it would have run over me. Out she stepped and announced that she was the Queen of the Fays, whom I would remember meeting before

in my last incarnation, in the same place. Strange to say, she looked exactly like you — and I must add, she acted exactly as you do."

"Why, what was it she did?" I couldn't help wanting to know.

"She heartlessly vanished, just as I began to hope she might remain and become my muse. You always vanish — and generally with another man."

We both laughed, and were laughing still when we came up with Mrs. James and Mrs. Vanneck, Mrs. West and Sir S., who were ahead of us with the others.

It had to be sunset and moonlight together for Melrose Abbey, for the heather moon was still too young to be allowed by Mother Earth to sit up late, all alone in the sky. This was not the "pale moonlight" Sir Walter wrote of, and looked to for inspiration in his "Lay of the Last Minstrel," but a light of silvered rose which seemed made for love and joy. I thought, if an alchemist or magician should pour melted gold and silver together in a rose-coloured glass, and hold it up to the sun, it would give out a light like this. It might have been an elixir of life, for it gave back the Abbey's youth, and more than its youthful beauty. The bullet-shattered stone turned to blocks of pink and golden topaz, and each carving stood out clear, rimmed with sapphire shadow, as we wandered round the cruciform Gothic ruin, our feet noiseless on the faded velvet of the grass. Even in the darkest shadow there lay a ruby flush, like a glow of fire under a thick film of ash; but inside the Abbey was a soft, gray gloom, as if evening hid in the ruins waiting its time to come out. The Trinity window, the Calvary window, the window with the Crown

of Thorns, and the east window in the chancel, which Sir Walter loved best, were all sketched against the sky in tracery of sepia and burnt amber, as I heard Sir S. saying to Mrs. West. And though I shouldn't have known what colours to use, because I'm not an artist, I could see that the tall stone shafts were like slender-trunked trees crowned with high clusters of branches, as in pictures of desert palms. I wondered if the men who carved the stone had travelled in the East and had seen palm trees rising from pale sand, black against a paler sky. And I wondered, too, if queer knots and fantastic holes in the gray trunks of oak had not put into men's minds the first idea of gargoyles.

Sir S. and Basil, who have been almost everywhere, agreed that they had seldom seen such marvellous detail of carving, so many whimsically planned and exquisitely carried out irregularities, or such lovely, well-preserved sandstone. That quarry which gave the material for Melrose and Dryburgh was a treasure-mine, and even the Romans knew and valued it. I was quite glad to find those two agreeing about something, because ever since Basil joined us they have differed politely over nearly every subject that came up.

We had been deeply occupied with Michael Scott's supposed grave, and the story of the "dark magic" by which he divided into three, Eildon Hill, in whose caverns Arthur and his warriors still sleep their enchanted sleep; and so, when some strangers approached us, we didn't even look up. A very intelligent custodian, who has written a book about the Abbey, was showing us round at that moment, and telling things about Sir Ralph Evers, whom the

Douglases killed for revenge, on Ancrum Moor, and all about the pillar with the "curly green capital." He had saved the Douglas Heart for the last, as the crowning glory in the history of Melrose; but when we'd done some sort of justice to everything else, he marched us into the presbytery where the Heart is buried, and where, according to his theory, it is commemorated in the carved stone tracery of the window.

A man with his back to us turned as we appeared, and I interrupted the custodian's learned discourse by crying out the name most sacred in the Abbey. "Mr. Douglas!" I exclaimed; for it was he — the Douglas soldier-man who was so kind, taking us all round the castle at Carlisle. He said we might meet at Edinburgh, as he was soon to have leave, and intended to visit relatives there, but it was a surprise coming on him in the shrine of his ancestors.

I thought, of course, his arriving at that minute was an extraordinary coincidence; but when Sir S. shook hands, and asked in a matter-of-fact tone, "How is it we meet here?" he confessed, as if half ashamed, that it wasn't exactly an accident. "You see, I often come to Melrose for a look round if I'm in Scotland on leave," he said, "and I saw in the paper yesterday that you were motoring in this neighbourhood, expecting to call at Dryburgh and Melrose before Edinburgh."

"Ah, yes — that interview Aline gave a journalist acquaintance of mine at Dumfries," I heard George Vanneck murmur to Basil, who looked rather cross.

"I arrived at the hotel just after you'd been there to leave your luggage and sign names in the visitors' book," Donald Douglas went on. "They said you were motoring

over to Abbotsford, and would come back to see the Abbey later; so it occurred to me, if I strolled over about this time, we might run across each other."

"Quite so," remarked Sir S.; an expression I detest, it sounds so like filing iron, especially as he said it then. However, the soldier-man didn't appear to mind in the least that the Great Somerled was stiff and unsympathetic. He attached himself to me, as I was his only other real acquaintance, except Mrs. James, in the party; and of course, as he reminded me, we were very old friends — as old as the day we first saw each other in the street at Carlisle, years and years ago.

He seemed to know as much as the custodian about Melrose and the Douglas Heart — which was natural, as he so values everything connected with his family name. He told me all about the good Sir James Douglas: how King Robert Bruce when dying begged his friend to take his heart to the Holy Land, and bury it where he had wished to go and fight for Christendom as an expiation for killing the Red Comyn. It was as good as a chapter out of a novel to hear how the Douglas got permission from the new king to be gone seven years on his great adventure; how he heard on his way to Jerusalem that King Alfonso of Spain was fighting the Saracens at Granada, and couldn't resist offering his help, being sure that Robert Bruce would have done the same; how in battle against Osmyn, the Saracen king, he was hard pressed, and taking the casket with Bruce's heart in it from over his own heart, he threw it far ahead of him in the enemy's ranks, shouting, "Pass first in fight, as thou wert ever wont. Douglas will follow thee or die!" And how he did

both follow and die, but falling only when he had killed many Moslems and hewed his way through their bodies to where the heart lay.

"That's the old story of the Douglas Heart," said the soldier-man, "and there's a new story of the Douglas Heart I hope you'll let me tell you some day before long, because it's even more interesting — to me."

"Why, then, I expect it will be to me too," said I politely, "so why not tell it me now, in Melrose Abbey, the place of all places?"

He looked at me in an odd way, and said, "Yes, it *is* the place of all places; but I'm afraid it's a little too early in the day ——"

Just then Basil came up to announce that Mrs. James had sent him to fetch me, as we must return to the hotel and dress.

"Too bad!" I exclaimed. But as Sir S. was not far off I called to him, "Don't you think we may come back here again after dinner?"

"Certainly, if you like," he answered. "Although the moon will have gone."

"That doesn't matter," said I; "there will be stars. Mr. Douglas has a *new* story of the Douglas Heart to tell me, which he thinks is even more interesting than the old, and it ought to be told in the Abbey."

When I explained this, Donald Douglas turned bright scarlet, and all three of the Vannecks burst out laughing, which I thought extremely rude and uncalled for. But Sir S. looked as solemn as a judge.

"No doubt he's right about it's being more interesting, and quite as credible," said he.

I don't know whether Mr. Douglas would have asked Mrs. James and me to walk over to the Abbey with him after dinner or not, if the weather had kept fine, but a thunder shower came up and it poured. So, although I teased him again to tell me the new story, when everybody but Mrs. James and he and I were playing bridge in our private sitting-room, he refused. "I'll wait till Edinburgh," he said, "if you'll let me see you there."

I had to explain that I didn't know where I should stay in Edinburgh, as that would depend upon my mother, to whom Mr. Somerled MacDonald was taking me.

"And Somerled himself, and the others?" he asked.

"Oh, they're going on," said I, "leaving me behind."

He looked delighted; so perhaps he had not forgiven the Vannecks for laughing.

# BOOK III

## BASIL'S PLOT AND "MRS. BAL"

# I

WILL the time come, I wonder, when I can calmly "work up" these things into a plot? If so, I foresee that I shall have to toss a coin to decide on the casting of my own part in the story. Heads, I am hero; tails, I am villain. But it has always been a theory of mine that ninety-nine out of a hundred novels are unjust toward some of their principal characters. Each (alleged) villain ought to have his motives and actions explained from his own point of view, not according to that of the (also alleged) hero and heroine whom he possibly tries (with success or failure) to separate. If this were done in books, villains *qua* villains would practically cease to exist; for it seems to me, in my experience of life as a man and a writer, that no normal, healthy villain is a villain in his own eyes. To understand all is to pardon all; and in analyzing his motives in order to justify himself to himself, he sees from every point of vantage, he knows how necessary certain actions are which appear evil to the limited view of the hero and heroine. They see him always obliquely, in profile; therefore they are prejudiced. And what is doubly unfair to the poor villain, the author of the book sympathizes with the others from first to last; whereas, if the villain were allowed to explain himself in his own way, not the author's, he would stand in the centre of the picture. Not being prejudiced

against himself, he would have a chance of appealing to the readers' sense of justice.

Unfortunately for me, I have a way of seeing two sides of a question at once, even when my own interests and those of another are violently opposed. This is a kind of moral colour-blindness; for to be colour-blind means merely that your eyes give you an impression of red and green at the same time, so that you can with difficulty tell which is which. Both kinds of colour-blindness, moral and physical, handicap you for success in life. On the whole, I think the moral sort is the more inconvenient of the two. If you saw nobody's motives but your own, you would be able honestly to detest your enemy and work against him. You would then be happy and successful, because of your complete self-confidence. It is seeing the enemy's point of view, and sympathizing in spite of yourself with him, which upsets you.

That has been my state of mind ever since I was a small and over-sensitive kid who wouldn't watch a terrier worry a rat because something made me put myself at once in the rat's place. Wiser boys called me a milksop and various other names, which I furiously resented yet inwardly recognized as just. Also they kicked me at times, and bashed me on the nose. I did my best in wild tempests of rage to kick and bash them in return, and now and then I gave them back as good or better than I had from them. But if I saw their blood flow, that same ridiculous Something which went out to the rat sickened within me, and was sorry.

I understand myself rather well, when I'm not in the grip of emotion; but at present my eyes are blinded.

I feel so intensely for myself and for my sister that I'm not sure whether I act as I do more for her sake or my own. Probably, however, it is for my own. And, curiously enough, I dimly see past this brain-storm and heart-storm to some day of calmer weather when it may still be possible to make use of myself and her, and — the others, as "material." I don't know if I shall do this, yet it may happen; and sometimes, even now, these disturbing incidents take form in my mind as scenes for a future book. I suppose this shows that the writer in me stands in front of the man. Some day I shall see myself clearly again one way or the other.

It was going to be a pleasant little story, this Scotch romance Aline and I had planned. I knew all the people in it intimately, and was in a hurry to pick the lock of their prison with my pen, for they were impatient to get out and begin to live and move. I thought Aline was almost as much interested, though she never gets into such wild enthusiasm over a new book that she can hardly wait to write it. She's too well-balanced, and has too many outside interests, as a very pretty and popular young woman should have; whereas, since the joy of writing saved my life, it has always been first with me — until the other day.

With Aline, the mischief began on shipboard — or perhaps a little before, though I realized then for the first time what was happening.

I have great faith in Aline's charm. I've seen several clever and important men go down before it; but somehow I felt doubtful about Somerled. If Aline has a lack — I may admit it here — it is temperament. Possibly I

have a touch of what she misses. And until I began to write, I often wished to be without it. Anyhow, I can see that, sweet and delightful as she is, a man of temperament might in exalted moments find a note flat in the music of companionship.

Somerled has, I should think, spent at least ten years in trying to bury his temperament under layers of hard common sense. But all the time it was there, like boiling hot lava under a cold crust; and when Aline told me how he valued their friendship, I wondered whether she were right, and just how deeply his admiration of her was rooted in his heart. I wondered if she were the type of woman he would want, not only for a friend, but by and by for his wife; and caring for Aline as I do, I worried about her affairs a good deal, apart from the influence they were likely to have on the book. Still, I confess I thought as much about the people in the story I had in mind as I did of my sister — if not more, at that time.

Then, the night Aline and I had our big talk about Somerled, the Girl came. And that was the end of the book for me too.

If some time I grow callous enough to write her into a romance (she'd fit into nothing else), I doubt if I could make clear the extraordinary and instantaneous effect of her on all those she approaches.

It isn't only her looks, though she's beautiful, as some blithe sprite met by chance in a forest. It isn't only her youth, for she is too absurdly young. A girl, to be taken seriously by a grown man, should be at least one-and-twenty. She is, I believe, on the lilied edge of eighteen. Ridiculous! Yet where she is, other women, also beau-

tiful and also young, are dimmed like candles that have burned all night when a window is flung open in the face of sunrise. Something in her eyes, her smile, the turn of her head, the light on her lashes and the shadow under them, the way she catches in her breath when she laughs and looks at you, the curl of her hair and the colour and fragrance of it, call to the deeps in a man. I defy any man to resist her completely. I have watched men in the street as I walked with her, or in hotel dining-rooms as she came in. Be they old or young, weak or strong, grave or gay, intelligent or dull, at sight of her the same pagan light of romance springs into their eyes. Mysterious and irresistible as the lure of the Pied Piper is the lure of this child who knows nothing of her own power.

She is a true daughter of Nature, but — she is also the daughter of Mrs. Bal.

Can Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald have been such a one when she was eighteen? No, in spite of the haunting, almost impish likeness, I'm sure she cannot. But I think Somerled wonders, and that now and then the relationship and the resemblance creep between him and his instinctive perception of truth in the girl.

She came to us with Somerled on the night of our first sight of her, leading him as Una might have led her lion.

It was a blow to Aline, a blow over the heart, and I felt it for her on mine. She managed her affairs badly next day, but I didn't blame her. I couldn't. Somerled and I had already lost our heads.

I scarcely believe Somerled was in love with the girl then; perhaps he isn't even now. He merely felt the call of youth, and a strange beauty and a stranger vitality.

His life needed this call. It waked up the sleeping youth in his own heart. It set his old enthusiasms singing like birds uncaged. It made him want to be again all the things he had decided not to be. It brought back beliefs in realities that he had feared were illusions. In other words, it freed the temperamental artist and dreamer from the spoilt and successful millionaire. But he could have let the bright vision go, perhaps, and have been pleasantly contented later to remember it, if — it hadn't been for Aline. Because she wanted to part them and make him forget the girl's existence, she took the very way to throw them together. Then, when she had done her worst, she turned to *me* for help.

I was horribly sorry for her, and the keen hurt of my sympathy made me fear for myself. The girl had got hold of me too, of course. When I found that she was going away from us with Somerled, I felt physically sick with the sense of loss. It was as if, with Barrie gone, everything was gone. I knew that poor Aline must be suffering exactly the same dumb tortures in regard to Somerled, whom she had thought so nearly hers. And that is why, when she begged me to help — somehow, anyhow — I wasn't sure whether I promised to please her or myself.

I was able to do very little toward keeping the promise, either way, until Edinburgh. It was there, really, that Aline and I first seriously took up the rôle of villains — if we are villains. But two persons less well cut out by Nature for such parts can hardly exist. We want to be good and happy, and we want each other to be happy, and all those whom we love to be happy; but we want them

to be happy with us and through us. This is where Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald comes into the plot. Without her, nothing could have happened as it is happening.

I shall never forget that first scene between the girl and her mother. I knew it would not be recorded in that poor little "book" of Barrie's, which every day she was writing and hiding. I thought that the book, which had no doubt been leading up to this scene, would probably stop short at the last sentence breathing hope of it.

Not that I have seen what she wrote. It was I who put the idea of writing into her head; but, though she didn't guess it, that was only done to give myself the right of Mentor when I still supposed we should all start gayly off together for Edinburgh from Carlisle. I suggested that she and I should "collaborate." Ha, ha! I believe "ha, *ha*," by the way, is an ejaculation confined entirely to thwarted villains in stageland; but if I am a villain, I'm not thwarted yet.

Aline's attack of temper, which upset everything, upset that scheme among the rest; but it seems the impulse I gave, pushed Barrie on to achieve something literary. Only, she steadily refused to let me see a line she wrote. The sole pleasure I got out of her taking my advice was in Somerled's face when I teased the girl about her "work." If he had been teaching her to sketch and paint I should have felt the same.

He is afraid of himself, because she has captured his thoughts; and afraid of her, because she's Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald's daughter. When he sees her followed by a trail of young men, like a bright comet with a tail it's been busily collecting in a journey through space, he asks

himself whether this is going to be Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald over again? He wonders if he dare believe in the kindness of Barrie's smiles for him, or whether his portion is no better than those she deals out gayly to the rest of us. At least, this is as I judge him, though from the first we've exchanged no confidences on the subject of "Mrs. Bal" or Barrie her daughter.

Somerled knew Mrs. Bal in America. I never made her acquaintance, but I saw her act in Montreal every night of her engagement there. I couldn't keep away — yet I didn't want to meet her. I thought perhaps if I did I should be ass enough to fall in love. That is the truth. A good many fellows of my acquaintance, and others I'd heard of, had fallen in love, and had been flirted with till the lady was sick and tired of them. After that they were very sorry for themselves. I never heard anything else against Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald, and I don't believe there's anything worse to hear, than that she's a spoiled, flattered, selfish, and self-centred beauty, who expects every man to fall down before her, and generally gets what she expects.

None of us talked much to Barrie about her mother, though at first she was continually bringing up the subject. We knew she thought of it constantly: that beneath all her joy in escape from bondage, in motoring, and in her adventures in beautiful, historic scenes, there was always that undertone — "When I meet my mother." And we too felt the strain of suspense, though in a different way — at least, Somerled and I felt it. I could see it often in the peculiar darkening of his face when anything happened to suggest the idea of the mother in the background.

As for Aline, I suppose it was but natural her only interest in Mrs. Bal should be, "How will her reception of the girl affect me, if at all?"

Aline's arranging to pick up the Vannecks at Dumfries gave her the excuse she's been longing for ever since the quarrel, to get me into Somerled's car, though she didn't wish to seem as if she were forcing herself upon him. Perhaps he might have found some way of shuffling out of it, but in St. Michael's churchyard at Dumfries she asked if he didn't think the "little romance a very pretty one?" He inquired what she meant. She appeared amused at his denseness — "so like a man!" — and said, "Why, what could I mean except dear Basil and little Barrie? I didn't know *any one* could help seeing! But don't say anything, please. It might nip the orange-blossoms in the bud."

She told me this afterward, because I had to know if I were to "live up to it." And I'm afraid by that time I was ready to live up to it, whatever the consequences might be. That is enough to explain why Somerled without hesitation invited me to migrate into his car when Aline had filled up Blunderbore with a party of three guests. He might even then have kept Barrie in her place beside him, or have appointed me to it; but that wouldn't have been Somerled as I see him, saying to himself, "Let them have each other's society, since that's what they want. I don't know what *I* want, or whether it's best for her or me that I should want anything."

Right or wrong about his state of mind as I may be whatever it was, he surrendered to me with an air of grave kindness which put on again the several years he

had thrown off in the last week. (Yes, it was only a week that had made these changes for all of us!) Sitting with Barrie and her good friend Mrs. James (great character, that little woman: must use her in a book sooner or later), I knew just how passionately the girl was looking forward to the "surprise" meeting with her mother. My nerves were as tense as hers — even more tense, it may be, for I was like one behind the scenes, knowing what she did not know. I felt so sure the "surprise" was going to turn out differently from what she pictured that I had a sense of guilt whenever I saw her smiling dreamily. I was continually wondering what would happen, and what she would do when it did happen. And I had the impression that Somerled constantly brooded over the same subject, asking himself the same questions. The happier the girl was, the sorrier we both were for her, silently, without telling each other, and the more we wished to save her from any suffering to come. I knew that I could read so far into Somerled's thoughts, where they kept to the same road as mine; but I doubt if he were conscious of any fellow-feeling with me. I was to him only the most deeply infatuated and the most seriously in earnest of Barrie MacDonald's rapidly accumulating string of ridiculous young men.

Sympathy and curiosity, tossed together in an indistinguishable mass, made a confused omelette of my emotions as we spun along that lovely wooded road past Galashiels and into Edinburgh. I wanted to witness the first meeting of mother and daughter, yet I dreaded it. I didn't see how I could decently contrive to be "on" in that scene, yet I felt it would be too bad to be true that

it should be enacted in my absence — almost as monstrous as that the world should be able to get on with me out of it.

It was Somerled, of course, who settled that his Gray Dragon (Barrie's name for the car) should arrive at Edinburgh on Sunday morning instead of Monday. He didn't trouble himself with intricate explanations, merely remarking that a Scotch Sunday was a bad day for travellers, apart from their religious conventions. If they hadn't any, others had; and those others were the very ones with power to make backsliders uncomfortable. They could close abbeys and museums, and they could shut the doors of inns in hungry faces at meal-times. "Besides," he finished, without a smile, "I took over the job of guardian *pro tem* from Barrie's grandmother, and I'm sure Mrs. MacDonald would wish her granddaughter to go to church on Sunday."

Barrie opened her eyes at this speech. Probably she'd never heard any talk of theology from Somerled, and was puzzled by his sudden interest in her spiritual decorum. I guessed that he wanted to give her the brilliant spectacle at St. Giles as a surprise on his last day of guardianship, but it occurred to me also that there might be other reasons in his mind for cutting short the tour. He might be tired of me as a guest thrust upon him. He might be sick of the American boys, and the soldier, Barrie's latest collected specimen (the Douglas youth also is travelling *en automobile*); or he might have reflected that it would be well to find out in advance where Mrs. Bal meant to pass her Edinburgh week. He must have realized that such a spoiled pet of society was as likely to visit admiring friends as to put up at a hotel.

We left Melrose a little before eight o'clock, promising Aline and the Vannecks (who hate getting up early) to engage rooms for them at the Caledonian Hotel. We had forty-six miles before us, but the Gray Dragon bolts a mile as a dog bolts an oyster, and as it was too early for many other dragons of his kind to be on the march, Somerled did a little discreet scorching through the lovely green and gold and purple landscape, past Galashiels, Stow, and Heriot. This haste — which didn't mean less speed — gave us time for a detour of a few miles to Rosslyn Chapel, which it would have been a shame to miss.

I wish I knew more about architecture! I thought Rosslyn a gem, and should have described it as a thing of unique perfection; but Somerled, who knows all about such things, said no, it was far from right artistically, though beautiful in spite of faults. My description would briefly be: whole chapel like great carved jewel-casket for a queen; ornamentation simply dazzling in intricacy and delicate detail; extraordinary pale rose-flush in shadow on stone pillars, which have the rich cream tints of carved ivory. No two alike: Spanish spirit visible here. Reminded me of detail in Burgos Cathedral. Nice story about the Prentice's Pillar. I looked it up when I found we were going to Rosslyn, and told it to Barrie before Somerled had a chance to open his mouth. Showed her the sculptured head of presumptuous man who dared finish the column according to design of his own, while this master was unsuspectingly studying up ideas for it in Rome. She thought the pillar more beautiful than the "horrid master's" work, and almost cried to hear that the prentice had died from the mallet-stroke of the jealous

avenger. Barrie with tears in her eyes is a danger to beholders. She was particularly adorable just then, as her hair was wet with rain (our first rain) and curled on her forehead in little tendrils. This rain, by the way, came on worse later, and was perhaps the original, if indirect, cause of what might be called our villainhood — Aline's and mine.

We were pretty well drenched getting from Dragon to Chapel and from Chapel to Dragon, though the distance was nothing, but the downpour severe. Then, we three passengers were safely housed in the closed car while Somerled and Vedder the chauffeur had the full benefit of the storm. They were protected by a glass screen, but the waterspouts seemed to find them out, and Mrs. James and Barrie were so sorry for the two men that I felt a "luxurious slave" to cringe in shelter while others soaked.

Vedder, by the way, interests me as a type. I thought Aline and I had used up nearly all possible types of chauffeurs, but he's a new one, and may prove valuable in case of future need. I understand that he was distinguished in his remote past as a prize-fighter, then as a Cockney coachman in London. Somerled rescued him from something or other — prison, probably, judging by the shape of his nose (think it must have been broken and mended in absent-minded moment by amateur) and the look he gives me occasionally from corner of eye — like vicious horse cowed by owner and dangerous to strangers. Barrie and Mrs. James think him such a "quiet, nice man." It is not their business to judge character, luckily for their illusions. My opinion of Vedder — who looks exactly like the frog footman in

Tenniel's illustrations of "Alice in Wonderland" — is that he's a smouldering volcano. He never speaks unless absolutely necessary, then uses as few words as possible, but his thoughts seethe in language unfit for publication except where his worshipped master is concerned. He also, in his way, is a victim of Barrie MacDonald. He has mentally apportioned her to Somerled, as spoil of battle. His vicious wall-eyes regard with distrust and hatred other male creatures who dare to contend for the prize. If he could arrange an accident to the Dragon without injuring it (an idol only second in his heart to Somerled) or any one under its wing, except me and himself, I feel sure he would risk his own bones for the sake of cracking mine. As for my sister, he does not approve of her. In looking Aline-ward, his face seems to become perfectly flat, like a slab of stone, features almost disappearing, except his slit of a mouth. "Nice, quiet man! So contented with his uncomfortable perch at his master's feet!" But — when the slightest mishap befalls the Dragon, and his services are needed as doctor or surgeon, he lets bottled-up steam escape. Without a word, he sets to work like a demon, accomplishing what he has to do in about half the time our best chauffeurs have taken. I should not be surprised at any moment to see ears, eyes, and nose emit lambent flames. Chauffeurs are a strange race, and Vedder is the strangest of the lot.

Drawing near Edinburgh, and encountering the first tram lines, it was pretty to watch Barrie's excitement. To understand, one had to remember that this was by far the biggest town the child had ever seen, so that even the outskirts impressed her as something stupendous.

As if for her pleasure, the rain stopped. "The nice, quiet man" uncovered us pampered passengers, and as we went on again, Edinburgh the beautiful, lying before us like a shadowy blue and purple map, began to take shape as a city of spires and monuments and gardens, and reveal its unique marvels. At this moment, I had my uses. Though it was my first sight of the Athens of Great Britain, I've fagged it all up so faithfully for the book that I know what everything is and what most things mean. I ventured to point out the Salisbury Crags, and Arthur's Seat watching over the town and Castle like a guardian lion. It was all very well for Barrie to come to Edinburgh to find her mother, but I didn't want her to miss realizing that she was entering perhaps the most beautiful city in the world, and one of the most historic, after Rome. I knew if I didn't give her this impression Somerled would, and wickedly I wished her to be primed by me before he got his chance. The only trouble was that I hadn't enough time to make her see fully all the glorious contrasts which ought to strike the mind at first sight of Edinburgh, where Yesterday and To-day gaze at and criticise each other across a gulf material and imaginary. Even though Somerled brought the Dragon down to snail's pace, I couldn't do the subject justice, with my best eloquence snatched at random from notebooks. Mrs. James would keep interrupting with quotations from "the doctor's" famous unfinished MSS. I would almost have preferred the silent Vedder as a chaperon. But there was some comfort in the certainty that Somerled was envying me the place to which I'd been appointed by himself. As he was driving through

traffic, and couldn't glance round, he was unable to see how Barrie's eyes wandered from the points I indicated to others which she selected for herself.

My dramatic announcement, that where now rises the solid gray mass of old Edinburgh once crouched the wattled houses of the first inhabitants, scarcely caught her attention. She would gaze dreamily at Arthur's Seat, because Mrs. James had just unfolded a meretricious legend to the effect that King Arthur used to sit there and watch his troops. And the dark crag of the Castle, with its thousand years of history, its crowning walls and towers, its chasms of purple shadow, riveted her fancy when I would have discoursed on the modern charm of Princes Street — that "half a street" so much more splendid than any whole street ever planned.

"The doctor told me, I remember," said Mrs. James, "that at the end of the eighteenth century, when they wanted to build the new Edinburgh, they had to bribe people by giving them large tracts of land in order to make them move out of the old town, or they wouldn't budge. Sometimes a quarter of what they presented to one man in those days is worth a hundred thousand pounds now."

In spite of the girl's excited admiration of the goddess-town, her first question on getting out of the car was to Somerled about her mother. "I think, if she stops at a hotel, she's likely to choose this one," he said. "That's why I've brought you here."

"Thank you," she answered. "Thank you for everything." Then it was my turn to envy him.

She was pale, her face drained of colour, and extraordi-

narily spiritual as she stood in the big hall, waiting to hear what Somerled would be told at the desk. He came back soon, and announced that Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald had engaged a suite at this hotel, but it was not known whether she would arrive that night or on Monday morning.

"Meanwhile, I've taken a room for you adjoining Mrs. James, as usual," Somerled said. "When your mother arrives and you have met, she can make any new arrangement for you she chooses."

"And you — will go on — with the others?" asked Barrie, catching her breath in that engaging way she has when she is excited and trying to control emotion.

"I shall go on — sooner or later," replied Somerled. "But — I shall have a look round Edinburgh first, and see what has happened to my old haunts."

I thought her face brightened.

"Aline and I must 'do' Edinburgh too, of course," said I.

She smiled, but as if she were thinking of something else. And it was then that suddenly, for the first time, I felt capable of developing into an able-bodied villain — in fact, committing any crime which could transfer from him to me the kind of look she had given Somerled.

"I must of course go back to Carlisle and my work, as soon as I have paid my respects to Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald," remarked Mrs. James.

"We'll talk of all that to-morrow," said Somerled, who, I suppose, engaged her at so much a thousand words — I mean, so much a day — as chaperon for his "ward."

"Whatever happens, you must see Edinburgh while you're

here. And besides, it's on the cards that I may be able to give you a pleasant little surprise before you leave Scotland. I rather hoped for details of it to-day; but there's nothing interesting in the mail they handed me at the desk" (he said this like a native-born American), "so we must have patience till to-morrow."

"A surprise!" echoed Mrs. James, looking quite pretty and young, as she surprisingly does sometimes. "Does Barrie know?"

"No," said Somerled. "Barrie doesn't know."

There was just time to go to our new rooms and make ourselves respectable for church, no light thing in Scotland. Aline and the Vannecks hadn't turned up yet, but, knowing them and knowing Blunderbore, I thought nothing strange of the delay. Aline's game was, of course, to make Somerled jealous of George Vanneck, her old and well-worn chattel, whom she at heart despises, and to seem not too eager for his (Somerled's) society, while I, attached to his party by special arrangement, could protect her interests — and my own.

Somerled had ordered Vedder to wait with the Dragon when the luggage had been taken down, and thus we saved ourselves some minutes which we should have lost in walking. We left the car as soon as possible, however, and plunged into the beauty and squalor of the High Street on foot. I annexed Barrie as a companion, and Somerled did not fight for her. Quietly he contented, or seemed to content, himself with Mrs. James, and my impression was confirmed that, whether he wanted Barrie or not, he was deliberately standing aside in my favour, giving me my "chance" — perhaps to test Barrie or me —

or both. Who could tell? Not I. Somerled is hard to read, even for a professional character-vivisectionist.

"Are you too much excited, and taken up with thoughts of your mother, to care about all this?" I asked the girl.

She admitted that she was excited, and perhaps a little absent-minded; but "all this," as I called it, was too wonderful not to capture her interest in spite of everything.

"Think of Queen Mary and her four Maries, and Darnley, and Rizzio, and Bothwell, and John Knox passing along as we pass now, on their way up to Holyrood?" said I.

"Yes. Oh, yes! I *do* think of them," she answered obediently, her eyes straying into the shadows of wynd or close, or tracing out the detail of some carved gargoyle on an old façade.

"Only you think of yourself more ——"

"Not myself exactly. But ——"

"What then?"

"Well — one thinks of queer things in a place like this, full of romances and — and love stories. I was wondering ——"

"Yes. Don't be afraid to tell me. We're fellow-authors, you know — brother and sister of the pen."

"That's it! Brother and sister, aren't we? How nice!"

"Of the pen," I amended hastily.

"Story writers must know all about love," she hesitated.

"We do," I encouraged her to go on.

"Then how, if you were writing a story (I'm thinking I may want to do one), would you make a girl sure whether she'd fallen in love with somebody?"

"I should make her," I answered cautiously, with an earthquake in my heart, "I should make her feel — er — a sort of electric thrill when he touched her, or looked into her eyes. I should make her feel that nothing was worth doing unless the man was with her."

"I know!" the girl murmured. "She would feel, wouldn't she, as if he *must* be there — as if she just couldn't go on living if he weren't."

"That's it," I said. "You've described it graphically."

She regarded me with sudden suspicion. "Thank you very much," she replied primly. "I'll take your advice and have it like that in my story, if I ever write it. What a *wonderful* old street this is! It's full of ghosts of kings and queens, and noblemen and great ladies, and soldiers and robbers, every one of them more important than the people we see."

I couldn't tempt her back to the dangerous subject and soon I prudently ceased to try. But she had given me what I've heard described as a "nasty jar." Barrie MacDonald wouldn't have appealed to Basil Norman for a definition of love if she'd thought of him as a man and not a brother! The side of me nearest my heart hated Somerled, marching on ahead, looking singularly attractive and gallant, much too interesting for a mere millionaire. And the side of me which has telephonic communication with my brain liked and approved of him, understanding how and why his personality made a strong appeal to most women. "You've had pretty well everything you've asked life to give you so far," I said to his back, "but this girl isn't your kind of girl. It's my sister you ought to want."

Suddenly, as we drew near to the crowned church of St. Giles — the old High Kirk — there came to our ears the skirling of pipes. Barrie started and stopped. Somerled glanced round quickly, his eyes keen. Would she prove her Highland blood? Would her heart beat for the pipes? That was the question in his look.

The girl was taken by surprise. We others knew what we had come for, and what to expect. She had no idea, except that she was being conducted decently to church.

At the first wail of the pipes the blood of her ancestors sprang to her face. She clasped her hands together, listening in silence to the barbaric music, her lips apart, her eyes aglow. And all this for the call of the pipes! Not yet had she caught her first glimpse of the pipers; but an instant later the tall figures came swinging proudly into sight, plaids swaying like tartan tassels, kilts moving with that wave-about-to-break rhythm given to their garments only by inspired pipers.

Even I felt a thrill as if each nerve in my body were a string drawn suddenly taut, but I was gloomily conscious that the Celtic souls of Somerled and Barrie felt more than I was capable of feeling, a mysterious something which drew the two together at this instant. Physically, I stood between them, but I knew that my body was no obstacle to the lightning flash between their spirits.

Not a word said one of us as the goodly company of soldiers swept by in a rich-coloured cloud of their own music. But when all had disappeared into the church, Somerled and Barrie looked at each other. His eyes praised her for a braw and bonnie lassie who had responded in fine style to her first-heard pipes, her first-seen kilt;

yet his lips had nothing to say but, "Well, what do you think of them?"

"Think?" echoed Barrie. "I think it's perfectly unbelievable how any girl can ever marry a man who isn't a Highlander and has no right to the kilt!"

There was one for Somerled and one against me; but it only got my blood up. Many a girl says a certain thing, and does another when her time comes.

"If I were rich," she went on, "I'd live in a castle in the Highlands, and I'd have it *full*, simply *swarming*, with pipers, playing me awake in the morning and to sleep at night."

"I should like you to see your own castle of Dunelin at Dhrum. There are plenty of pipers there. I've kept them all on, meaning them to play for me some day," said Somerled, who had just then forgotten, I think, the existence of myself and Mrs. James, and failed to observe that in the distance all Miss Barribel MacDonald's missing young men were assembling, as if to the call of the blood — the soldier from Carlisle, who had collected a friend, and the American contingent of four.

"My own castle?" Barrie repeated.

"You know what I mean. It would be yours if you'd been a boy. As you aren't ——"

"It's yours!" laughed she.

"Not by right of blood. Only by right of money."

"Well, that's the sovereign right," she insisted, pleased with her own pun.

Then the victims of our miniature Circe arrived in the foreground, shook hands, bandied jokes, and became the most prominent figures in the picture. For the first time

I was glad to see them, nor did I bear the youths ill-will for separating me from our beneficent enchantress in the stately church with historic banners. They had separated her from Somerled as well.

After service was over, we stopped only for a look at the stones which mark in the pavement the old Heart of Midlothian, and then hurried back to the hotel, escaping the Americans, but clung to by Douglas and his cousin, another Douglas, who hospitably bade us all to visit him at all his houses. He mentioned several, dotted about in various parts of the country; but when he heard that Miss MacDonald was retiring from the party in a day or two, he ceased to press the general invitation.

There was news of Mrs. Bal at the Caledonian. A maid had arrived who thought that her mistress would not follow until the evening: Somerled asked Barrie, therefore — rather wistfully, I thought — if she would care to go out again in the afternoon. "It will make the time pass for you," he added. I sympathized with him against my will. It was to be his last day of "guardianship," yet he was generous enough to invite me; and not only that, but to let me sit in the car with Barrie and Mrs. James, on the way to Arthur's Seat. After this effort, however, human nature had its way, and he kept her to himself for the rest of the afternoon. It was the first time he had done this since I fastened myself upon the party. To-day, it was evidently by deliberate intention, not accident. It was as if he said to himself, "These last hours shall be mine." And I wondered if indeed he actually meant them to be last hours. For my part, I certainly meant nothing of the sort. Mrs. Bal, or no Mrs.

Bal, Aline or no Aline, Book or no Book, I didn't intend to walk out of Barrie's life without trying to win a foothold in it for the future.

If I had an opinion on such matters, I should have said, up to a week ago, that I didn't approve of marriage for a girl under twenty, as she couldn't possibly know her own mind; but Barrie is the kind of exception to prove any rule. She ought to have a man to take care of her.

Before five we started back, for Mrs. James thought Barrie needed a nap. It appeared that she hadn't slept the night before, owing to the excitement of suspense; and now "her eyes must be bright for their first look at her mother."

Drawn up at the pavement in front of the hotel as we slowed down was a big blue car, and another smaller one close behind, both of the same make, and evidently belonging to the same people. We had to choose between waiting for them to disgorge passengers and unload luggage, or get out at a distance from the entrance. We took the latter course, but at the hotel door Barrie stopped us. She wore no veil; and though it was to Somerled, not me, she spoke, I could see that her face was pale, her eyes dilated.

"Do you think that can be my mother arriving?" she asked in a low voice.

He looked back at the lady who, at this instant, was springing from the blue car to the pavement, her hand in that of a man who offered unnecessary help. It was a tall figure in a long cloak the colour of a duck's egg, and it gave the effect of willowy slimness despite the disguising mantle. A close-fitting toque of greenish grayish blue

covered the small head, and the face was practically invisible behind a thick veil of the same mystic colour; but as the lady turned her long throat for a look at the other car, there was a glimpse of banded red hair under the toque, and a curl or two at the nape of the neck.

The two women in the smaller car also had red hair. They were not veiled, and their neat black hats and jackets somehow advertised them unmistakably as ladies' maids. Neither was pretty, in spite of her flaming crown of glory; and neither was young.

The remembrance of an "interview" with Mrs. Bal which I had read in some paper flashed back to my mind. She had told the reporter that "only red-haired servants could understand the moods of a red-haired mistress," and that, after disastrous experiences with "dull creatures who had no temperament themselves, and couldn't live with any one who had," she decided to engage only red-haired maids.

Perhaps Somerled knew of this idiosyncrasy, or else he recognized the tall form in spite of its wrappings, for he said, "Yes, I think very likely it is your mother, Barrie. But we can't be sure; and in any case I strongly advise you not to try and speak to her here in the street."

"Oh, I won't till she gets her veil off," said Barrie breathlessly, "but I must wait and see her come into the hall. I ——"

Somerled gently but firmly drew the girl into the hotel. Mrs. James and I followed. Evidently Somerled wanted to persuade Barrie that it would be better to keep out of the lady's way as she entered, and meet later, if indeed this were Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald; but the girl seemed

hardly to hear his murmured arguments. She did yield far enough to let him lead her a little aside, but she took up her stand again where she could see the blue figure enter. She did not speak, or insist upon her own way, yet I think it would have been impossible to move her without using brute force. Somerled realized that nothing was to be done with the child for the moment, and accordingly did nothing, except to stand beside her. Mrs. James and I took our places mechanically on the girl's other side, though no word passed between us.

Never had I seen Barrie so beautiful. Though a brilliant colour burned on her cheeks, she looked curiously spiritual. Her lovely body seemed a crystal lamp through which shone the light of an eager soul.

A minute of this silent suspense, and the lady in the blue-gray cloak came in, followed by the two red-haired maids carrying such valued possessions as no hotel porter must be allowed to touch: little handbags, gold monogrammed; a long coat of blue Russian fox; silk-covered air cushions, and delicately bound books. Behind came employés of the hotel, bearing rugs and other luggage; but the big man who had helped the lady from the car did not appear. We had seen his back only, yet the impression lingered in my mind that he was no servant, but a gentleman, a personage of worldly as well as physical magnitude.

The lady went toward the desk, then paused, and with an imperious and impatient little gesture directed one of her maids to untie her thick blue veil. The knot was loosened with a skilful touch, and the face of Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald was revealed. For a moment or two we

saw it only in profile, as she talked with the people at the desk, and bade the elder of her two women write in the visitors' book. Then, as she turned away to go to the lift, we were favoured with the full blaze of her celebrated beauty.

It is three years since I saw her last, in America, but she has not changed, unless to look younger. She might not be a day over twenty-five, and her figure is as slender, as spirited, and as graceful as a girl's. She advanced more or less in our direction, though without seeing us, and her walk was peculiarly attractive — slightly self-conscious and suggestive of the actress, perhaps, but light as a smoke wreath. If she makes up off the stage, she is so skilful that she beats Nature at Nature's own game. Her complexion, with the gray-blue veil flowing in folds on either side her face, looked pearly, and the rippling lines of her red hair glittered like new copper. It was impossible she should not know that every one in the big hall was gazing at her; but such was her self-control, gained in long experience as a beauty and popular favourite, that she seemed not to see any one. Hers was not a morose remoteness, however. That might have offended admirers and kept money out of the theatre. It was the radiant unawareness of a passing sunbeam.

A few more seconds and this charming figure, framed in floating clouds of chiffon, would have reached the door of the lift, to be wafted out of sight like a pantomime fairy. But Barrie could no longer be held within bounds, for the great moment of her life had come. She darted away from us, her figure as tall, more youthful, more willowy, and more charming than the other, though singularly like

in movement and in outline. The resemblance between the beautiful woman and the beautiful girl produced the effect of contrast, and ruthlessly dug a chasm of years between them. Suddenly, as they stood face to face, Mrs. Bal — who had been young as morning — reached the rich maturity of summer noon.

The thing Somerled would have prevented had happened; but the reins were out of his hands, and it would do more harm than good to snatch at them. None of us moved, but we were nearer than any one else to the mother and daughter, near enough to hear every word they said to each other.

"Oh, mother, it's I — your daughter Barrie, come to find you," the girl faltered. "You know — Barribel. You named me. I've run away from Grandma ——"

"My goodness — *gracious!*" gasped Mrs. Bal, her brown eyes immense. In her groping bewilderment, her blank amaze, she looked younger again, her rather full face very round, almost childish, her dimples deepening in the peachy flush of her cheeks. She stared at Barrie as if the girl were a doll come alive — an extremely complicated, elaborate, embarrassing doll, copied from herself and let loose upon the world. And Barrie did not take her eyes from the beautiful, surprised face for an instant. In her wistful suspense she scarcely breathed. "Oh, do love me — do be glad to see me!" her soul implored through its wide-open windows.

The silence, falling after Mrs. Bal's astonished gasp, lasted but an instant, though it seemed long to us who waited. To others at a distance, others who knew nothing of the story, whose sight and hearing were not morbidly

sharpened, the little scene probably meant no more than a surprise meeting between the well-known actress and a very pretty girl enough like her to be a sister. But to us who did know the story — and something of Mrs. Bal — the pause was like the pause in court while the jury is absent.

Mrs. Bal was thinking, observing, making up her mind. Suddenly she broke out laughing — a nervous, yet impish laugh, and seized the girl by both hands. At the same time she bent forward — not down, for Barrie is as tall as she — kissed the girl on both cheeks, and whispered something.

It was a brief whisper. She could have said no more than half a dozen words, but they stupefied Barrie. She threw back her head, almost as if to avoid a blow. Tears sprang to her eyes, and she pressed her lips together in a spasmodic effort at self-control. The bright rose-red of excitement was drained from her face; but she did not draw away from her mother, who still held the girl's hands. All she did was to turn her head with a bird-like quickness and fling one glance at Somerled.

I don't know whether or not she meant it as a call. Probably she didn't herself know what she meant. Only, she was in need of help, of comfort, and involuntarily turned to the strongest, most dependable personality in her small world. I would have given all my faculty as a writer — my dearest possession — to have been in Somerled's place — to have had her appealing to me while her air-castle crumbled.

He went to her at once, and spoke to Mrs. Bal, who had not seen him till that instant. She blushed slightly at

sight of him, I noticed; and I wondered whether she had flirted, or tried to flirt, in the past with the artist-millionaire. It was impossible to guess whether she were pleased or displeased, but evidently his appearance on the scene was ruffling in one way or another to the lady's emotions. "This is a surprise!" I heard her say, in a softer, fuller tone than she had had time to put into her first sharp exclamation at sight of Barrie.

Then both voices dropped. The two talked together while the girl stood by in silence, pale and expectant, depending on Somerled. Mrs. Bal said something which made Somerled laugh — one of his cynical laughs, such as I hadn't heard from him lately. Not once had he looked at Barrie. All his attention was for the mother. She asked a question. Answering it, he indicated Mrs. James and me.

"Oh, please introduce them!" Mrs. Bal commanded pleasantly.

This was a signal for us to approach.

"Mr. Basil Norman," she said. "You are the author, of course. How nice to meet you! Of course I read your books. And your sister who collaborates — where is she?"

"I don't know yet whether she's arrived or not," I explained. "I meant to ask at the desk ——"

"I want to know her. Please tell her so. And this is Mrs. James. Why, yes, of course! I remember you — in the days of my captivity." She laughed a child-like, impish laugh. (Barrie has one rather like it, but more spontaneous, less effective.) "You haven't changed."

"Oh, thank you, dear Mrs. MacDonald," exclaimed the little woman, radiant with pleasure — for I've found out

that her two great desires are to keep her youthful looks, and to be intellectually worthy of the vanished doctor. "I'm sure *you* are not in the *least* altered, though it must be seventeen years ——"

"Oh, my dear Mrs. James, don't — *please* don't!" cried Mrs. Bal, laughing and dimpling, and holding up both gloved hands in mock prayer. "Don't mention the number of years. This is getting to be simply awful. Shock after shock!" She laughed again, glancing roguishly at Barrie. "I want you all to come to my sitting-room—this very minute—to hold a council of war. It's most necessary. You dear, pretty child" — this adorably to her daughter — "how much more mischief have you done already? How many people have you let into the ghastly secret?"

Barrie hung her head, and looked down. She must have known that sympathetic eyes were on her, and have wished to avoid them. "There's only Mrs. West and — and — I suppose her friends the Vannecks — and Mr. Douglas — a Lieutenant Douglas ——"

"Horror! Their name is legion. What a scrape. Well, I must appeal to their mercy. Please come up with me, everybody, and we'll talk it over and see what's to be done. There isn't a moment to lose."

By this time I began to guess what she was driving at, though the dazed expression of Mrs. James told me that she was still in the dark.

We got into the lift and were shot up to the next floor, nothing being said on the way except a conventional word or two about the motoring weather. "I came in a friend's car — I'll tell you all about it," Mrs. Bal added as she led the way to her rooms.

The two maids had arrived on the scene already. Doors were open; luggage was being taken in under the direction of the red-haired ones; but in the large sitting-room there was no sign of confusion. Quantities of flowers adorned it, in tall glass vases and gilded baskets tied with ribbons. Signed photographs of royalties and generals and judges, the latest aviators and successful explorers, all in monogrammed silver frames, were scattered on mantel and tables and piano-top. There were plump cushions of old brocade on the several sofas and lounges. The largest table had a strip of rare Persian embroidery laid across it, and was graced rather than laden with novels, boxes of sweets, and silver bonbonnières. Evidently the maid who had come in advance had had her hands full!

"I must have pretty things to give me a home feeling. Touring would be too horrid without that," she laughed. (Mrs. Bal laughs often in private life; what clever woman with dimples does not?) "Now, sit down, and let us discuss this desperate situation. But first — come here, Barribel. I want to look at you."

Barrie came. Mrs. Bal caught the girl's hands, and held her out at arm's length.

"You pretty creature!" she exclaimed. "Oh!" and she threw an appeal to us. "To think I should be the mother of THAT! Isn't it simply appalling? But I can't be, you know. I can't be her *mother*. Now *can* I? I've told her already — I had to decide in a flash. I admire her immensely, and we're going to be fond of each other and the greatest chums. But we must be *sisters*."

Then I knew what she had whispered to make Barrie start and blanch. She had said, "I won't be your mother."

And Barrie had turned involuntarily to Somerled because she had felt herself unwanted and her heart was breaking.

All this was preparing me for a career of villainy, though I must say in self-defence that it was Aline who lit the match. "The woman tempted me, and I did eat!"

"Come and sit by me, lovely doll," said Mrs. Bal, pulling the girl down beside her on the most cushiony and comfortable sofa. "So you are the baby! I haven't forgotten you. I've thought of you a *lot* — really a lot. But you never seemed *mine*, you know. *They* wouldn't let me feel you belonged to me. They were so good! Of course I had to leave you for — for them to take care of. They thought they knew everything about babies. I dare say they were right. I *had* to escape. I couldn't have lived with them another day, in that awful house. But I've been oh, *so* proper, and good, really. Even they could have hardly been shocked. And I've hired three red-haired watch-dogs. But it isn't only myself I want to talk about — it's you. I do think you're the prettiest thing I ever saw — though I oughtn't to say so, perhaps, because I believe we're alike. Aren't we, Somerled?"

"In some ways, not in others," dryly returned the gentleman addressed.

"Oh, I know the differences are in her favour — Diogenes! All the more reason why I can't possibly own her for a daughter. My yearly profits would go down a hundred per cent. And although she's perfectly *darling*, and I'm going to love her — as a sister — she couldn't have come to me at a worse moment."

"Oh — why?" pleaded Barrie, speaking for the first time.

"Because — you may as well hear this, all of you, since I've called you to a council of war. I want you to realize" — and she gave each of us a look in turn: a lovely, characteristic "Mrs. Bal" look — "that I'm on my knees to you. I've thrown myself on your mercy. You've got to help me out. The truth is" — she began taking off her gloves and looking down at her own hands, her rings sparkling as the pink and white fingers were bared — "the truth is, I'm a little — a tiny little bit — tired of acting. I'd like to leave the stage in a blaze of glory while everybody wants me and there's no one to take my place. There's only one trouble — I'm so horribly extravagant. I always have been. I'm afraid I always shall be. I make heaps of money, but I can't save. If I say good-bye to the theatre, I shall want millions. I don't feel I can rub along on less. So that means — I shall have to marry somebody else's millions, for I haven't got the ghost of one of my own."

As she explained her position she looked deliberately past Somerled and out at the window. This made me sure that a vague suspicion of mine was founded on fact. Mrs. Bal had angled for Somerled, and he had been one of her few failures. She couldn't be pleased at encountering him again as her daughter's self-appointed guardian and champion. It seemed to me that the situation complicated itself, to Somerled's disadvantage; therefore — it might be — to the advantage of the next nearest man, myself.

"There is some one," Mrs. Bal went on, with a slight but lessening constraint, "who — rather likes me, and I rather like him — better than I can remember liking

anybody. He's got lots of money. His name is Morgan Bennett. Somerled — you know him."

"Yes," said Somerled. "I thought his back looked familiar."

So the big fellow who helped Mrs. Bal out of the blue car (also big, in proportion to the size of the owner and his fortune) was Morgan P. Bennett of New York, the Tin Trust millionaire. Somerled's puny horde of millions dwindle into humble insignificance beside Morgan Bennett's pile. If Somerled has made two millions out of his mines and successful speculations, and a few extra thousands out of his pictures, M. P. Bennett has made twenty millions out of tin — and unlimited cheek. He is so big that his pet name in Wall Street used to be "The Little Tin Soldier."

"He has been — dangling lately," Mrs. Bal went on. "Oh, nothing settled! I confess I wish it were. I mean to take him if he asks me, and I think he will. You wouldn't believe it, but he's a shy man with women. I do believe he's frightened to propose. He's bought a house in London, in my favourite square. And now he's taken a shooting-lodge in Forfarshire — such an amusing place: a huge round house with as many eyes as in a peacock's tail, all staring cheerfully, and high chimneys grouped together like bundles of asparagus. I've just been staying there with his sister, Mrs. Payne, whom I believe he imported from America on purpose to play gooseberry. You know — or perhaps you don't — I tried my new play for the first time in Dundee, just one night, and it went gorgeously. This house of his isn't far off, and I was motored back and forth for rehearsals and so on,

while the company stayed in town. I simply fell in love with the place; and he's trying to buy it — to please me, I *hope*. There's a round porter's lodge and a round garage: and the round house stands on a round lawn with a round road running round it like a belt, so that it all seems the centre of a round world with the sun moving round it. He brought me from there to Edinburgh to-day, and two of my maids in another car. He won't stop here in the same hotel with me, of course, but he'll drop in now and then — naturally — and he's taken his box at the theatre for the whole week. We must arrange this sister business before he calls. I've confessed to him that I'm twenty-nine, and it's perfectly true. I've been twenty-nine for several years. But he'd hardly believe me so old. And what *should* I do — I ask you all — if a grown-up — oh, but an extremely grown-up — daughter suddenly loomed over my horizon? Even if I put back her clock to fifteen instead of — never mind! — I couldn't manage to be less than thirty-one, and that with the greatest difficulty. Now you see how I am placed."

"Shall I go away and — and save you all the bother?" asked Barrie, in a very small voice.

"Oh, no, no, dear child; nothing of the sort, of course," protested Mrs. Bal, patting the hands which Barrie held tightly clasped together in her lap. "You mustn't be naughty and misunderstand. I don't want to lose you like that, now you've taken all the trouble to find me — with the help of our good Somerled. But — will you be a sister to me? — as popular men have to say in Leap Year."

"I'll do whatever you want me to do," Barrie answered

in the same little voice, like that of a chidden child. "Am I — would you like me to stay with you here, or ——"

"Why, I suppose" — Mrs. Bal showed that she was startled — "I suppose we must fix up a place for you — for a few days. But I don't see how you can go with me on tour. It wouldn't be good for you at all. The best way is for us to have a nice little visit together, and get acquainted with each other, and then perhaps I'd better send you to — er — to my flat in London, or — to boarding-school, or somewhere. I *quite* understand you wouldn't go back to your grandmother at any price, would you?"

"I'd rather do that than be a trouble to you," said Barrie. "Only, I don't think she'd take me back. But I could try ——"

"Certainly Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald won't hear of your going back to live in Carlisle, I'm sure," said Somerled, looking somehow formidable to reckon with as his eyes met Mrs. Bal's. Then, to the girl's mother: "I am connected with her father's family in a way, you know, and I took advantage of the connection to make Mrs. MacDonald's acquaintance at Hillard House, after I'd met — her granddaughter. The arrangement between us was that I should play guardian *pro tem.* So if you want any advice about — Miss MacDonald's future, perhaps you'll be good enough to let me help you."

"Thanks, oh, thanks! I accept gratefully," replied Mrs. Bal, who had no doubt already heard downstairs some few words explaining Barrie's presence with our party in Scotland. "And you'll tell everybody she's my sister, won't you?"

"I'll not say anything to the contrary," he promised grimly.

"And you, Mr. Norman? You, dear Mrs. James?"

"I'll protect the secret with my life," said I, laughing. If I were a woman, I should have been hysterical by this time.

"I'll keep my mouth shut," replied Mrs. James, with pitying eyes that said to the girl, "If *I* were your mother, dear child, young as I like to look, I'd be *proud* to own you!"

"What about your American victims?" I inquired of Barrie.

Mrs. Bal pricked up her ears. "What victims?" she asked before her daughter had time to speak.

"Four young men who have prostrated themselves under Miss MacDonald's chariot," I explained. "All who see her do this." In adding the little tribute I meant well; but I saw in an instant that I'd been tactless. Mrs. Bal regarded the girl reflectively; and that uncomfortable faculty I have for reading people's thoughts told me she was repeating to herself, "Ah, so all the men who see this child fall in love with her, do they? H'm!"

"They — I never talked to them about — about having a — mother," Barrie stammered.

"And this Mr. Douglas?" Mrs. Bal asked. "Is he too a 'victim?'"

"He appears to be something of the sort," I was obliged to answer, as she appealed to me. "The Douglas Heart, you know! And he has a cousin with whom he's staying ——"

"Oh, do, dear Mr. Norman, like an angel of mercy,

'square' them for me, will you, and all the others who know?" Mrs. Bal implored, ostentatiously ignoring Somerled, who had too evidently gone over to the younger generation. "Your sister, too — and her friends? Will you go and see if they have come, and if they have, bring them here — or plead my cause eloquently, or something?"

"I'll go at once," I agreed, rising. On principle, I disliked and despised the gorgeous, selfish creature; but there was that in me which longed to please her, and delighted in being chosen as her defender, over the head of Somerled, so to speak. I was not sorry to escape from the scene which Barrie's pale face and o'er-bright eyes made very trying; also I was really anxious to find out if Aline had come. If she had not, I should begin to worry about her and the poor old car — to say nothing of the tribe of Vanneck.

As I went out, I heard Mrs. Bal exclaim, "Oh, by the way, if she's to be my sister, she can't be a MacDonald. She'll have to take the name of Ballantree. It was my maiden name, you know."

A disagreeable surprise awaited me outside. I learned that, while we'd been out after luncheon, my sister and the Vannecks had come, but that Aline had had a mishap. She'd been wearing a motor-mask veil, according to her custom, in order to protect her complexion. The talc front over her face had been damaged in the morning's storm, and somehow her eyes were injured. I should have received the news sooner had I gone to the desk instead of following Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald upstairs.

Off I hurried to Aline's room, where I found Mrs. Vanneck with my sister, and an oculist whom George had

hurried out to fetch. The poor girl was suffering, and a good deal frightened, though we tried to console her. As she went to the window to be examined by the specialist, I could see that her face and hair and lilac silk blouse were covered with a powder of talc, which sparkled like diamond dust. Her eyes and lids were full of the stuff, it proved, and she cried with nervousness and pain as the oculist proceeded to get it all out.

It was impossible to speak to her of Barrie and Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald, but I told Maud Vanneck, who, though mildly horrified, promised for herself and her brothers that the secret should not be revealed.

When I returned to Mrs. Bal's sitting-room, I found Somerled and Mrs. James gone. Barrie was alone with her newly found — sister, and a more forlorn little figure than our young goddess it would be hard to imagine. Andromeda chained to her rock could not have looked more dismally deserted by her friends. A room had been taken for her, and she was now transformed into Miss Barribel Ballantree. "What a good thing I wouldn't let her be called Barbara after me," said Mrs. Bal. "We should have had to change her whole name, and that would have been *really* awkward!"

I should have retired at once, when my errand was done, but Mrs. Bal would not let me go. I think, for one thing, she wasn't at ease with Barrie alone; and for another, she wanted to see if I too were a victim of this young person who might perhaps turn out a formidable rival as well as an inconvenient daughter. Barrie evidently wished me to stay; and I made no effort to conceal my real feeling for the girl from either of them. I thought

that now was the time to let myself go. Barrie was inwardly yearning for comfort and love, and I opened the door of my heart for her to see that it and all within were hers. I was on the spot, and Somerled wasn't; so I hoped that Barrie might be thankful even for her "brother of the pen." Mrs. Bal's bright, observant eyes saw and understood.

Presently she announced that she was rather tired, and would lie down, as there would be rehearsing to-morrow in the theatre; and though she'd opened in Dundee, she would be almost as nervous in Edinburgh as on a first night. Her maid was rung for. The eldest and reddest one came. Barrie and I went out together, I longing for a few words in the corridor, or at least a friendly pressure of the hand. But I saw that she was in no condition to be spoken to. The reaction was coming on, and I let her go at once. She almost ran down the passage to a room not far away, and slammed the door.

. . . . . .

Neither Mrs. Bal nor Barrie appeared again that evening. Presumably they had dinner together in Mrs. Bal's quarters; and the heather moon shone as through a glass darkly for the rest of us. Aline was ordered to keep her room for the next few days, which settled our plans — or hers, at all events. And we were a party of men dining that night, the two Vannecks and Somerled and I, for Mrs. James "had a headache," and Maud kept Aline company.

The great Somerled was reflective if not morose. I wondered what his schemes were concerning Barrie, for I

imagined uneasily that he was working with some idea; and if I didn't mean to sit still and let him cage the dove while it fluttered homeless and forlorn, I must come out of my corner into the open to fight for it.

After dinner Aline sent for me, and her message included Somerled, if he could "spare her a few minutes." He could and did with a good grace. We went together to the small sitting-room, which looked dull compared with Mrs. Bal's decorated background, though George Vanneck and I had done our best, on an Edinburgh Sunday, in the way of roses. Somerled had forgotten to incarnate his sympathy in flower form, and I read remorse in his eyes as they fell upon Aline, piteous and prostrate.

Electric light was not permitted, and the room was lit only by a few green-shaded candles which made the invalid ethereally pale. She reclined on a sofa and wore her best tea-gown, or whatever women call those loose classic-looking robes nowadays. It was white, and becoming. She had built up a wall of cushions, against which she leaned, and her hair was done in two long plaits under a fetching lace cap which gave her a Marie Antoinette effect. This hair-arrangement interested me scientifically, because when I breakfast with Aline in our private sitting-room at a hotel, she often has her hair hanging down, and it has never looked so long nor so thick as it did on this occasion. She must have had some clever way of plumping it out. Her eyes being tender and inflamed had temporarily lost their beauty, so she had tied over them a folded lace handkerchief or small scarf.

"You look like a model for a classic figure of Justice," said Somerled — "all but your smart Paris cap."

"Why, was Justice blind? I thought that was Love," said Maud Vanneck, gayly airing her ignorance. I couldn't help thinking — nor could Somerled, I'm sure — that Aline looked more like Love-in-a-mist than stern Justice; but I feared that he had definitely ceased to regard her from the love point of view, if ever he'd inclined to it.

Aline, who had heard nothing yet about Mrs. Bal, was anxious for the story. I saw that Somerled desired me to speak, but I threw the responsibility on him. I wanted to know how he would tell the story; but I might have guessed that he would be as laconic, as non-committal as possible, and that, much as he might yearn to do so, he would not criticise Barrie's mother.

"I think she admired her daughter," he said quietly, "but being what she is, and looking no more than twenty-five, what can one expect? Of course the sister fraud will be found out sooner or later; but the important thing in Mrs. Bal's mind seems to be that it shall be later."

"Is it right for us to help her deceive poor Mr. Bennett?" asked Maud Vanneck, who is a person of earnest convictions.

I chuckled at hearing the big chap called "poor," perhaps for the first time in his life; and even Somerled smiled.

"None of us are pledging ourselves to lie for the lady," said he. "We simply hold our tongues. If Bennett asks Mrs. Bal to be his wife, he's not the sharp man of affairs he's supposed to be if he expects to find her a mirror of truth. When he discovers that she has a grown-up daughter he'll shrug his shoulders, and perhaps never even let her know she's been found out. I'm not very well

acquainted with Bennett, but I've met him a few times, and his most agreeable social quality seems to me his strong, rather rough sense of humour. I expect he'll see the funny side of being hoodwinked by Mrs. Bal. And a few years more or less on her age — what do they matter to him? He's forty-five; and on the whole he couldn't get a wife to suit him better."

"I have a sneaking sympathy with Mrs. Bal," confessed Aline, in her gentlest voice. "She's conquered all of you men, and has no further fear of you; but I feel that she's trembling in her shoes because of Maud and me. I should love to reassure her and let her know that we're not cats."

"Shall I take her a message?" I suggested, trying not to seem too eager. "I'm sure she'd like to get it."

Aline smiled indulgently. "Poor boy, doesn't he want me to say 'yes?' It's too late this evening, I'm afraid; but call on her and Barrie early to-morrow morning, and ask if she'd care to drop in on the poor invalid, on her way to rehearsal. I'd better see Mrs. Bal alone. She may want to say things she wouldn't wish Barrie to hear — don't you think so, Mr. Somerled? And, by the way, now your little ward is — more or less — safe in other hands, have you settled your future plans?"

"I expect to have something mapped out to-morrow," Somerled answered.

"You'll go on with your trip — your rest cure — I suppose, as you meant to when we — that is, before you were saddled with all this responsibility?"

"I've been looking forward to Edinburgh, from the first," said he, evasively.

Aline saw that she would get no more satisfaction, and ceased to risk irritating him; but after her guests had bidden her good-night, she kept me for a talk.

Of course she made me describe the scene between Barrie and her mother, but she was more interested to know how Somerled had looked, what he had said and done, than in my opinion of Mrs. Bal.

"What do *you* think he means to do?" she appealed to me, desperately. "Do you think he's so infatuated with Barrie that he'll offer to take the girl off her mother's hands and marry her?"

"I've been studying Somerled for both our sakes," I said. "What I think is, he's been telling himself the girl is too young and all that, and ought to have a chance to meet a lot of other men. Yet he's seen how she unconsciously attracts every male creature who comes along, and that it's a danger for her if ——"

"*Unconsciously* attracts! But I forgot, you're infatuated too. And she *doesn't* attract everybody. George Vanneck hardly considers her pretty. He can't bear this rising generation of long-legged young colts, he says; and he calls her hair carrots."

"We'll cross George off the list. It's long enough without him, and increasing with leaps and bounds. There'll probably be more names on it by to-morrow night" (evidently I have a prophetic soul). "But to go back to Somerled. Of course he foresaw something of what happened to-day: but Barrie's face when Mrs. Bal suggested being a sister to her was enough to turn a man of marble into a man of fire; and I don't think Somerled's resolutions up to that point were as hard even

as sandstone. He must see now, as I do, that there'll be no place for the poor child with her mother, whether Mrs. Bal marries a millionaire or goes gayly on with her career as an actress. What is to become of a girl like Barrie, left to her own devices, with every man — well, let's say every *second* man — who passes, stopping to flirt if not to propose? My fear is that Somerled's resolutions are turning round the other way, and that he's contemplating himself as permanent guardian — if Barrie'll take him."

"Take him! She'll snap at him. She shows her feelings in the most disgusting way. Oh, my *dear* boy! I apologize. But I have feelings too — as you know only too well."

"I'm afraid she *is* getting to like him," I said, "but I persuade myself, anyhow, that she's more in love with love in general than with Somerled in particular. She's under the influence of the heather moon."

"I'm not going to let her have Somerled!" Aline cried out sharply. "I can't bear it. Can you?"

"I'm an idiot about the girl," I admitted. "I get worse every day. The more flies that collect round the honey the more I want it myself. I didn't know I was that sort of person, but I am. The worst of it is, she calls me her brother, which is fatal."

"No, it isn't. It shan't be," said Aline. "I shall get her for you."

"Thank you very much," said I.

"I'm not joking. An idea is on its way to me. I've been seeing it dimly for days, but its success depended a good deal on Mrs. Bal. Now, her being afraid of me

makes it easier. I can't lie here idle, with all this going on — yet I can't let *him* see me as I am. My eyes look hideous. They're pink, like an albino's. Otherwise I wouldn't listen to the oculist. But I must do something. I begin to see what I *can* do, if you'll go on helping me and yourself, and not be a fool."

"I won't be more of a fool than Nature made me," I assured her, "though I may be a fool to love that girl."

"No, for you can make her care. Of course you can. She's hardly more than a child."

"You were married at eighteen," I reminded my sister. "At least you always tell people you were."

"If you were a woman, you'd be a thorough cat! It's true — I wasn't much more, but *I* was mature in mind. I'd seen the world. Barrie MacDonald will make you happy. You'll play together all your lives, and she can take my place, helping you to write stories. It will be quite a romance for the newspapers. And when she's out of sight, out of mind with Ian Somerled, he'll realize that she wasn't the right one. He'll come back to me, and see that I was always meant for him."

"A woman's instinct is often right. Also many a heart is caught in the rebound," said I, falling back on proverbs. And in this way, with the talc that entered Aline's eyes, malice entered our hearts. Thus we took up our parts of (alleged) villain and villainess.

. . . . . .

Next morning, as early as I dared, I sent to ask if I might give Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald a message from my sister. Word came back that she would see me at

once. Five minutes later I was knocking at the door of her sitting-room, and, obeying her "Come in," found myself in the presence of a Vision. She was in one of those tea-gown arrangements like Aline's, only more so. She had a cap which, I fear, would have made Aline's look, as they expressively say on the other side, "like thirty cents." And if Morgan P. Bennett had seen the beautiful Barbara then, he would have proposed without hesitating another second. That is, he would have done so if Barrie hadn't come in before he began. She did come while I was giving Aline's message to Mrs. Bal, and though she looked as if she hadn't slept, to me she was more lovable than ever. I tried to convince myself that Aline was right; that this girl and I were made for each other; that, if I could take her away from Somerled, she and I were bound to be happy together forever after.

Mrs. Bal explained that she was later than usual because she had not had a good night, and her chief maid, in reality a trained nurse, had been giving her electric massage.

"Now I feel equal," she added, "to tackling the world, the flesh, *et le diable*. Mrs. West is the world. Morgan Bennett's the *flesh* (he weighs two hundred pounds!) and — I shall be the devil. I always am at a rehearsal. But the mood shan't come on while I'm with your sister. Now I must go and get dressed. I'll not be fifteen minutes. Really! You don't know what I can do in the flying line, when I choose. You may stay and amuse — my little sister."

I knew better than to ask questions. If the girl wanted sympathy she could find it in my eyes, but she would

resent pity. I praised Mrs. Bal, and found that I'd struck the right note.

"Yes!" Barrie exclaimed. "Isn't mother — I mean Barbara — gloriously beautiful? She wants me to call her Barbara, and I shall love it. I shall love to do whatever she wants me to do, I'm sure, because she's such a darling. Everybody must want to do what she wants them to do, whether it's right or wrong — though she wouldn't want anything she *thought* wrong, of course. Just fancy, she's given me heaps of pretty things. I begged her not, but she would make me take them — a string of pearls, and this ring — my very first!" (How I wish that I had put her "very first" ring — or kiss — on the finger she displayed!) "And two bangles — and she's going to pay back Sir S. — I mean Mr. Somerled" (so she has her own name for him!) — "the money he lent me for my father's brooch. Barbara doesn't want the brooch. I'm to keep it. And she says she'll give me an allowance — but she expects Grandma to leave me everything in her will. *I* don't — and I'd rather not, though moth —— Barbara thinks I shall some day be quite well off. I fancied we were very poor, but Barbara says Grandma must have got back nearly all that was lost, by saving."

I guess that the girl was making talk to show me how well satisfied she was with everything; but whenever she met my eyes she looked away, to interest herself in some photograph or ornament.

In less than the promised fifteen minutes Mrs. Bal appeared again, very lovely and ridiculously young in a short blue serge dress, with a turned down collar that showed her firm white throat. I was allowed to remain

with Barrie while "Barbara" went up to see my sister; and the ice being broken between us, we chatted comfortably of everyday things, I unreasonably happy because I had got in ahead of Somerled for once. It began to seem like a game of chess between us; I — directed by Aline — playing against Somerled. If Aline upstairs were at this minute making the move she planned, it would be check to his queen, Barrie of course being queen.

The only questions I ventured to ask the girl, and those in a casual way, were, "Had she heard from or seen Somerled since yesterday afternoon? And what was the programme for her, during this week of the new play in Edinburgh?"

Her answers were that she had neither seen nor heard from Somerled, and that she didn't know what she was to do during the week. She hoped to see something of Edinburgh. She supposed we — and Mr. Somerled — would soon be leaving for the west or north. But she had written Mr. Douglas, by Barbara's request, and he was very nice. He might be counted on to show her things. He was invited to call this afternoon with his cousin. Jack Morrison had written asking to come too, and Barbara said that he might do so — bringing his three friends. She — Barrie — must be very, very careful always to say "Barbara" and never — the *other*. She could *quite* understand now how the darling felt, though it had seemed queer at first.

By and by Mrs. Bal returned, and I saw by the light in her eyes and the colour on her cheeks that the conversation with Aline had been interesting. Hardly had she arrived and begun demanding from her various maids various

things wanted at the theatre, when Somerled sent up to beg a moment's talk with her.

"Tell the gentleman I shall be delighted," she said to the hotel servant: and I saw that she was smiling the impish smile which Barrie has inherited.

"So glad you came before I got away!" she exclaimed, shaking hands with Somerled. "Five minutes more and I should have missed you. I'm due at the theatre now. The poor wretches are rehearsing without me, but I must turn up for a scene, at eleven!"

"I won't keep you five minutes," said Somerled, quietly. "I only want to ask if you'll let Barrie — provided she'd like it —" he glanced at the girl, whose eyes brightened — "take a few excursions with her friend Mrs. James and me, in my car this week. You'll be busy and ——"

"I should have been delighted, and I'm sure Barrie would," broke in Mrs. Bal, "but you're just too late. A new thing for you, isn't it? I've been having the most charming visit with Mrs. West, who is better, but must keep to her rooms for two or three days. Her car will be eating its head off unless it's used, and I've promised that her friends the Vannecks — such *nice* people! I met them in Mrs. West's sitting-room — and Mr. Norman shall have Barrie for — probably — the very excursions you have in mind. Too bad! But first come, first served! You've all been so good to this girl, one hardly knows how to choose between you. But I thought Mrs. James was going home at once? I understood from Barrie that she said so last night?"

"She has decided to stay until the little surprise I'm trying to arrange for her, comes off — or on. She doesn't

know what it is, but she pays me the compliment of taking it on trust. She'll be disappointed at having to give up the motor runs she was looking forward to with Barrie."

"You've plenty of old friends in Edinburgh, I'm sure," suggested Mrs. Bal, "and you can make up a party to console dear Mrs. James for the loss of Barrie."

"I don't believe Mrs. James can be induced to take any excursions without Barrie," said Somerled: which meant that he didn't intend to leave Edinburgh while the girl was in it and at the mercy of her erratic parent. I thought he was anxious Barrie should understand that he was not going to desert her. Perhaps she did understand, for she is quick in penetration; but her own pride, and loyalty to Mrs. Bal, kept her from showing that she felt need of protection, or even that she supposed Somerled to be offering it. She did show, however, that it grieved her to refuse his invitation. She took the "tip" he gave and put it all upon Mrs. James: how sorry she was not to do any more sight-seeing with dear Mrs. James. But I knew that the name in her heart was not the name on her tongue.

Aline had scored. I wanted to know just how, and how far, but I determined not to leave Barrie with Somerled. I needn't have worried, however, for Mrs. Bal and I had the same thought. She asked if Barrie would like to go to the theatre with her and watch a rehearsal. Naturally, Barrie said yes, and Somerled and I saw them off in the smaller of the two motor-cars which Morgan Bennett had placed at Mrs. Bal's service for the Edinburgh week. As for Bennett himself, he was apparently "lying low," by her wish or his own; but I expected to see him at the

theatre that night. Of course, we were all going to turn out in full force for "The Nelly Affair." Somerled had taken a box, he told me, and proceeded to invite the whole party; but there also Aline had got in ahead. During Mrs. Bal's call upon her, they had arranged that the Vannecks and I should sit with Barrie in stalls offered by the Star. Mrs. Bal had (she assured us fluently, before starting off in her car) intended asking Somerled and Mrs. James too, and stalls were provided for them. But as he had already engaged a box, she would give the seats to the two Douglases. Perhaps he — Somerled — would have room in his box for those nice American boys, of whom Barrie seemed so fond?

Aline was eagerly waiting for me to come back and congratulate her upon her great success. She wanted to tell me everything; but her desire to talk was nothing compared with my yearning to hear.

"It's all right," she began. "I've made a bargain with Mrs. Bal. I told her you were in love with Barrie. That's the way I broke the ice, after I'd paid her compliments and she'd sympathized about my eyes. I said I'd keep her secret, and answer for the Vannecks, if she'd give you a chance with Barrie."

"By Jove!" I grumbled. "You didn't mince matters between you! Anything said about Somerled?"

"Why, I told her that the child was fancying herself in love with Ian, and behaving rather foolishly. And I said that Ian was naturally flattered, but that he was the last man to marry a baby like Barrie; and if we didn't act quickly, the poor little girl might suffer. You must have noticed, Basil, that Mrs. Bal doesn't like Ian Somerled."

"I've noticed that she takes an impish delight in thwarting him."

"That's because he once thwarted her. She admitted as much. Or, at least she said she asked him to paint her portrait, and he did paint it. When the picture was finished, he gave it to her, and didn't even make himself a copy."

"Well," I replied, puzzled, "I don't see anything in that to upset her. Even for a beauty like Mrs. Bal it's a compliment to be painted by Somerled. And surely it was a mark of regard to make her a present of the picture, when he can get from a thousand to five thousand pounds for anything he chooses to do."

"Oh, you *man*," exclaimed Aline. "And you pretend to be a student of women's characters! Of course Mrs. Bal was furious because he didn't beg to do her portrait and then make two, one for her, and one for himself. Fancy my having to explain! And besides, there must have been more than that in the affair. She wouldn't have asked him to paint the picture if she hadn't wanted to see him often alone, and make him fall in love with her. His giving her the portrait was a kind of defiance, to show her that he didn't care *that* for the original."

"Oh, well, if you think so!" said I.

"Mrs. Bal thinks so. And she's enchanted to get her revenge. Not that she'd have chosen this way, because, of course, it's a sickening thing to have Ian and all these men know that she's old enough to be the mother of a grown-up daughter — and to be obliged to throw herself on their mercy to help her out of the scrape. She laughs and pretends it's a joke, but she simply *hates* it. I hinted

to her that if you married the girl there'd be no talk ever about Barrie being Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald's daughter. That should be *forgotten*, I said, though they could correspond with each other and be good friends. Barrie would live in Canada with you, and be out of Mrs. Bal's life altogether. And I impressed it upon her that your ideal existence was a quiet country place. It was the same as telling her that she'd be *rid* of Barrie by giving her to you. Whereas, if the girl should marry Ian, Somled's wife would always be before the public eye, and everybody would be sure to find out all about her. Mrs. Bal caught my meaning, you may be sure; and she promised me that Barrie should go everywhere with us, or rather, with you and the Vannecks, till I can get about. Anyhow, *nowhere* with Ian. Now, you see, I've done all I can for you."

"And for yourself," I was mean enough to add, for the thought of what we were doing together was not a good thought, and it brought out the worst of me.

"I haven't any one to work for my interests. *You* have," she retorted; and as I'd no mind for further recrimination I begged her pardon, thanked her gratefully, and proceeded to tell all that had happened in Mrs. Bal's room. It was not pleasant for Aline to hear how prompt Somerled had been in trying to relieve Mrs. Bal of her burden; but there was consolation in his disappointment.

"Do I look very horrid?" she questioned anxiously, "or do you think I might ask him to take pity on me for a little while this afternoon, and sit here when you're all out sight-seeing?"

I reassured her, saying that her eyes looked no worse

than if she'd been indulging in a "good cry." She decided, however, that if Somerled came she would bandage them again and continue to resemble Justice. I didn't ruffle her feelings by remarking that morally the resemblance would be a parody.

When Maud Vanneck and I went, soon after luncheon, to ask if Barrie would walk in Princes Street, with perhaps a stroll along the High Street, and on to Holyrood or the Castle, I found Mrs. James in Mrs. Bal's sitting-room with the two Douglases and the four Americans. The mother and daughter had returned late from rehearsal, and had just finished luncheon. Mrs. Bal had a letter in her hand, which had evidently arrived with a box of orchids, probably a tribute from Bennett; and the lady's desire to get us out of the way suggested the imminent arrival of a caller worth keeping to herself.

Finally, it was arranged that we should all go out together, the Douglases assuring the rest of us that they could open doors which would be shut to strangers.

"Where's Somerled?" I asked Mrs. James, in case he were condescending to lie in wait somewhere.

"When I saw him last," she replied, "he'd got an immense pile of foreign letters, and several cablegrams. It looked as if he'd enough to occupy him the whole afternoon. Important business I suppose; yet in spite of all, I believe he's been concerning himself with some surprise for me. He may perhaps have news I shall like to hear when I get back. I expect he's been telling some friend about those Stuart chairs I want to sell, and thinks he's got me a buyer."

The Douglases took us to see the *Scotsman* building,

and the secret, inner workings of a great newspaper. We descended from marble halls to vast underground regions, the lair of a monster immeasurably more powerful than the Minotaur who ramped and raved under the Palace of Crete. The roar of this modern Minotaur was as the noise of Niagara broken by stormy bursts of thunder. It stunned the intelligence; it shrivelled the organs of speech like a dried kernel rattling impotently in an old nutshell. It filled the world and made human happenings, such as individual lives and deaths, seem of no more importance than the snapping of thumb and finger in front of a cataract. I couldn't have lived in the tumult long and kept my wits; but we heard of an employé who, when some tooth or nail in the enormous monster smote him, could not bear to stop away long enough to complete his cure, because he was unable to bear the "awful stillness" of the hospital. Persons of impregnable nerve-power let us deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth, showing us the dragon's brood, and his terrible wife whose business it is not only to print the newspaper, but to cut its sheets, and eventually to lay them like eggs, at the rate of thousands a minute: a most appalling creature she, who so battered my brain with her accomplishments and the wild cackle she made over them, that weakly I let Barrie be snatched from me by Donald Douglas.

In the roar and rush and riot I was incapable of caring, though vaguely I recalled the fact that I had come out with the sole object of annexing the girl's society. Vaguely too, though only vaguely, I resented the Douglas method; but I had my revenge almost before I recovered

sense enough to want it. There came, I know not why or how (perhaps one of the masters decreed it, to strike our ears with the contrast), a sudden unexpected lull. It was only a comparative lull, and it lasted no more than a few seconds; but there was time enough to hear Douglas yell into Barrie's ear, "I must have you for my own."

The next instant he was purple through his soldier-tan. He knew the dragon and the dragon's wicked wife had betrayed him, as he took advantage of their domestic clamour to speak in a crowd as though he were alone with his love in the desert. What Barrie answered, or if she had breath to answer, none of us could guess, though all, especially the four Americans, were bursting with anxiety to know. Later, however, when we went up to the Castle (anything but the Castle, with its thousand years of history, would have been an anticlimax after that wonderful dragon cave), Donald Douglas walked meekly with his cousin, leaving Barrie to Jack Morrison. As for me, I had temporarily lost my individuality, and with that roar still echoing through my brain, vibrating through my nerves, I was glad to crawl along, talking to nobody, and picking up dropped or untied bits of myself as I went. For the moment, frankly I didn't care how many men proposed to Barrie, or whether she accepted them all. But afterward, it was different. It occurred to me that Jack Morrison was not only a handsome and gallant fellow, but said to be very rich, at least as rich as Somerled, and ten years younger. Aline and I might be mistaken about the girl's feelings for Ian. Very likely it was no more than a romantic sort of gratitude; and though I

absolved the child from the smallest taint of mercenary motive, it was almost impossible that a sleepless night had not given her some wise counsel. She was too sensitive and quick-witted a girl, I reflected, not to have seen that she could not go on living with her mother, and that it was a necessity to find a niche somewhere. All these young men saw this also, though they knew no more than the fact that they were prayed to consider Mrs. Bal an elder sister of "Miss Ballantree," therefore they were hastening to offer her sheltering niches, more or less desirable. In other circumstances, they would have waited a few days, long enough at least for Barrie to know which was which, and get their features and some of their characteristics ticketed with the right labels; but as it was, each saw he had no time to waste if he didn't want his friend or foe to get in ahead of him. While we were at the Castle, looking at Mons Meg (which recalled Thrieve) and the banqueting-hall of armour with its faded banners and fadeless memories; gaping at the mysterious place over the entrance door where, in a bricked-up alcove, a baby skeleton was found wrapped in cloth of gold embroidered with a royal monogram; walking through the wainscoted room where Mary of Guise died; gazing at the long mislaid crown of Bruce ("the Honours of Scotland"); seeing sweet Queen Margaret's Chapel where the Black Rood lay till it went in state down the hill to make Holyrood holy; peering at the wall-stairway down which the Douglas boys were dragged after the "black dinner"; admiring the kilted soldiers; and drinking in the view over hill and valley and mountains, towns and nestling villages, the vast, colourful checkerboard of beau-

tiful Mary Stuart's journeys, flights and fightings: while beholding treasures and splendours which are as the red drops of Scotland's heart's blood, man after man took his place at Barrie's side and became her cicerone. Each talked with her awhile, and after a few brief minutes allowed a change of partners, the discarded one humbly retiring to Mrs. James's side. It was really funny; or at least so it seemed until enough self-assertion came back to admit of my entering the lists. Then I promptly lost my sense of humour, and had no wish to look for it. I wanted only to look at Barrie, who was unusually flushed and bright of eye.

By this time there wasn't much left to tell her about the Castle or the Castle Rock. When I began to work off my erudition by mentioning the name of Edwin, for whom Edinburgh was named, and who made it a royal borough in the eleventh century, she said:

"Oh, Mr. Douglas's cousin, the other Douglas, told me that!'

When I related the tale of that gallant Francis who was able to lead Sir Thomas Randolph and thirty soldiers up the perilous rocks to surprise the Castle at night, having learned the way when sweethearting down in the Grassmarket, Barrie confessed that she had heard the story already. Jack Morrison had found it in some old book he had bought at the shop under John Knox's house, in the High Street. There was no use trying to work up or classify historic thrills for her in this vast heart of Scotland; she had been given them all, with generous additional thrills from private hearts, Scottish and American.

"Has every single one of those chaps proposed to you?"

I flung the question in her face. "You might tell your Mentor."

"Oh, not Donald Douglas's cousin!" she answered hastily. "He's engaged to some one in the Highlands."

"Good heavens, then all the rest *have* done it, in a bunch!"

"I think you're *horrid!*" she said indignantly. "I've always heard that girls don't tell such things to any one."

"They do to their brothers — of the pen, if they have any such. Besides, you don't need to tell. I'm a regular Sherlock Holmes where people I — like, are concerned, and I know what's been happening to you this afternoon. A manna-rain of proposals, in the wilderness of Edinburgh Castle. Many girls would have accepted them all, and then sorted them out to see which they liked best; but I have a shrewd idea from the look of the gentlemen's backs that they are now one and all your adopted brethren."

"It's almost wicked to joke on such a subject," Barrie reproached me, trying not to laugh, "and it's not nice of you to make fun of them, just because you consider yourself superior, as an author who is always analyzing people's minds and motives. It's not as if they were so much in love with me that they had to propose in a hurry for their own sakes. It's not that *at all,* but only because they thought it wouldn't be very convenient for — Barbara to have me live with her, travelling about so much, or if she should marry. So they felt as if something ought to be *done* for me, you know, as soon as possible."

"Sainted, unselfish young men!" I murmured. "But I don't consider myself superior, as it happens. I'd do the same thing in a minute if I thought there were the faintest

chance of your giving me an answer different from theirs. Is there?"

"Don't talk nonsense!" she exclaimed. "But of course, I'm happy to say, I know you don't mean it."

"Well, if you're happy to say that, I'll leave you your fond illusions for the present," I returned. "But, as girl to man, tell me; don't you rather like being proposed to?"

"It's very exciting," she admitted. "I never expected, somehow, that such a thing could happen to me."

"Oh, didn't you? Why not?"

"Well, there's my red hair, which I always thought was *fatal*, until I saw my mother's portrait — and heard Mr. Somerled say he liked painting red-haired women."

"Red hair *can* be fatal, though not in the way you appear to mean," said I. "Which thrilled you more, the Castle or the proposals?"

"Oh, the Castle, of course!" she answered scornfully. "After the first one or two, they seemed like interruptions."

All five of my rivals (there might have been six, had it not been for the girl in the Highlands) having had their medicine, I was allowed almost as much as I wanted of Barrie's society during the walk down from the Castle Rock, and to Holyrood. Together she and I walked through that most romantic royal house of all the world; and long as I may live, never shall I forget those hours. Chestnut-tressed Mary herself could not have been lovelier than the red-haired girl who walked beside me, and when the royal beauty came on a day of chill, northern haar, to her Scottish realm, she was only a year older than this child we all love but think too young for love. Yet

already, at nineteen, Mary was a King's widow, and had been Queen of France.

It was of Barrie's romance, Barrie's future, I thought most, as we wandered side by side through the haunted rooms where Mary danced and loved and suffered, where her grandson Charles I of England came, and left his ruby Coronation ring for remembrance, and where Prince Charlie, her far-off descendant, made hearts flutter at the great ball given in his honour. But it was the past which had all Barrie's thoughts, unless she sent a few to the man who had stayed at home reading his letters, instead of following in her train.

We looked at Queen Mary's bed with its tattered splendour of brocade: the box filled with relics of her short reign in Holyrood: her neat embroideries, her tear bottle, and Darnley's glove, which Barrie thought Mary would not like to have kept with the other things: and then, having saved the best for the last, I took the girl up to the little supper-room where Rizzio was murdered. Barrie gazed at everything in silence: and now we could both be silent when we liked, for the chastened ones had meekly trooped off to show Mrs. James the Abbey, or Royal Chapel, where Mary and Darnley were married, and where a hundred things had happened, things connected with others whose romances were as poignant if less well remembered here, than hers.

We had come up the secret stairway in the wall, because I wanted Barrie to miss no thrill this place could give; but it was not the thought of the murder-scene which most caught her imagination. She listened to my dramatic version of the tragedy of the room, and of the dark closet

where Rizzio tried to hide, and shuddered a little; but soon she was drawn, as if beckoned by an unseen hand, to the bevelled mirror with scalloped edge, which Mary brought with her to Scotland from France, a dim oval full of memories, may be, of dear, dead days at Amboise and Chenonceaux.

"What does that poor piece of blurred glass make you think of so intently?" I asked, when Barrie had stood silently staring down the veiled vista of mystery for many minutes. "You look like a young modern Cassandra, crystal gazing."

"So I am!" the girl almost whispered. "I'm trying to see something in the mirror — the things *she* saw in it — or to see her eyes looking into mine. If anything can be haunted, it is this mirror. Think of what has passed before it. But do you know, I don't believe it has ever really intelligently seen anything since the day Queen Mary went away from Holyrood. I feel she ran here, to take one last look into her mirror, and to bid it farewell as she bade farewell to France, gazing and gazing as the land faded from her sight forever. Then, when she'd gone, the glass she loved grew dim as it is now, and *blind* because it could no longer give back the brightness of her eyes. There's nothing left in it now but sad dreams and memories of the past."

"Did you ever," I asked, "go down into the cellar at midnight on All Hallow E'en with a candle and a mirror and wish to see the face of your future husband?"

"No, indeed," Barrie answered emphatically; "we had no such tricks at Hillard House."

"Now, in this mirror, if any in the world, you might be

able to see such a vision, not only at midnight, but on an ordinary afternoon, like this for instance," said I. "Suppose you stop thinking of Queen Mary for a minute and concentrate on yourself. Wish with all your heart for the face of the man you'll love, the man you'll marry, to appear under this clouded surface of glass."

Barrie looked somewhat impressed by my mysterious tone as well as the overwhelming romance of her surroundings. She put her face close to the mirror, and I was about to profit by the situation I'd led up to when some one stepped between us and looked over the girl's shoulder. It was Somerled, who must have come in just in time to overhear my advice, and take advantage of it for himself. But he could not wholly blot me out of the mirror. Both our faces were there, to be seen by Barrie, "as in a glass darkly." She gave a little cry of surprise, and wheeled round to smile at Somerled.

"You came after all!" she exclaimed, forgetting or pretending to forget the solemn rite which had engaged us. But I must admit I was in a mood to be almost superstitious about it. I had prophesied to the girl that she would see reflected the face of the man she was destined to love and marry. An instant later she had seen two faces, Somerled's and mine. Would she love one man, and marry the other? Or would only one of these two men count in her life?

Perhaps Queen Mary's mirror knew. It looked capable of knowing—and keeping—any secret of the human heart.

. . . . . .

That night — oh, my prophetic soul! — Morgan Bennett saw Barrie at the theatre, and looked at her through

his opera-glasses almost as often as he looked at Mrs. Bal in her gay, exciting comedy-drama, "The Nelly Affair." The play had been written for the actress and suited her exactly. In fact its whole success was made by her magnetic personality, her beauty, and her dresses. She scarcely left the stage, and had something to do or say every minute, yet I noticed that she found opportunities to observe where Bennett's eyes were straying. As for Barrie, she saw nothing, heard nothing, thought of nothing, but her mother, glorious Barbara, who for this evening was Nelly Blake, a girl of eighteen, seeming not a day older. Barrie, in a white dress, with her hair in two long braids (Mrs. Bal thought she was too young to wear it done up), sat among us in an ecstasy. Was ever any one so beautiful, so clever, so altogether marvellous as darling Barbara? This was as it should be; and we who knew the girl, knowing that she had never before seen a play, nor the inside of a theatre, thought her pathetic; but Morgan Bennett, who did not know her, merely thought her pretty and wondered how he could get to know her. The very flash of his opera-glasses was interested and eager; and when I proudly took the girl behind the scenes to compliment Mrs. Bal after the first act, I was far from surprised to see Bennett appear almost immediately in the same mystic region. Barrie and I were with Barbara in a little room which she intended to use as a boudoir for the week of her engagement; and when an employé of the theatre announced Mr. Bennett, she looked annoyed. For an instant she hesitated visibly; but as he was probably aware that she had visitors, there was no good excuse for sending him away. Part of Mrs.

Bal's success with men consists in knowing what kind of snubs they will meekly endure from a lovely spoiled woman, what kind they neither forget nor forgive. She sent word to Mr. Bennett that he might come in.

He accepted the invitation promptly, and Barbara, with quick presence of mind, introduced him to her little "sister Barribel."

"Barribel! That's a pretty name," he said, shaking hands with Barrie, his eyes on her face. "Miss Barribel Ballantree, I suppose."

"You may suppose so!" returned Mrs. Bal, laughing.

"I saw this young lady sitting out in front," he went on, instead of congratulating the actress at once on the success of the first act, which had "gone" splendidly with the large audience. "I said to myself there must be a relationship between you two: and I was wondering."

"Well, you needn't bother to wonder any more," broke in Mrs. Bal, very gay but slightly shrill. "I must have spoken to you about Barrie?"

"'Barrie' is what you call her?" said he, smiling at the girl. "That's a very nice pet name, and suits her, somehow. You surely never spoke of your sister to me. I shouldn't have forgotten." He added the last words with a look intended as a compliment for Barrie; and any woman wishing to monopolize his attention exclusively might have been pardoned for thinking that he had looked at her more than often enough in the circumstances. In his big way he is attractive, to certain types of women, very attractive indeed, and I could understand that his millions might not be his only charm for Mrs. Bal. He has eyes which can be fierce as an eagle's; the strong,

almost cruel jaw of the predestined millionaire who will mount to success at any cost; a pleasure-loving mouth, and — when he is pleased — a boyish smile. When he is severely displeased, I shouldn't care to be there to see him, especially if he were displeased with me. But I suspect Mrs. Bal to be one of those women who could not love a man unless she were afraid of him. In that may have lain the secret of Somerled's former fascination for her, if it existed.

"If I've forgotten to mention Barrie, it's because I'm always talking about *you*, when we're together," Mrs. Bal excused herself with dainty impertinence of the sort Bennett will stand from her. "If it isn't about you, it's about your motors — or some affair of yours."

"I thought you, and *your* affairs were generally the subject of our conversations," retorted the big man, still looking more at the young girl than at the woman. "Miss Ballantree is your affair ——"

"She has only just become so," Barbara hurried to explain. "Her grandmother, who thoroughly disapproves of me and all actresses, has kept the child shut up in a moated grange all her life. It's a wonder I didn't forget her existence! She *had* begun to seem like a sort of dream-sister, until she suddenly dropped in on me yesterday, and announced that she'd run away from home. I'm simply enchanted to have the darling with me, for my own sake, or I should be if I hadn't such a beautiful, unselfish nature that I find I worry myself into fits about her when she's out of my sight. To-night I couldn't half act, because I was thinking about her all the time, and wondering what on earth I could do to make her

happy. I foresee I shan't be able to study or rehearse or anything, while she's getting into mischief in a big hotel. I shall send her away though to-morrow, for a few days, with some *very* dear friends of hers, who will give her a good time until I settle down and feel at home with this new play — in which, by the way, you don't seem to take the *slightest* interest. You haven't said a word about it, or how it went, or how I acted."

"You know better than that ——" Bennett was beginning when Barrie (to whom, despite his size, he was a figure of no importance) broke in without being aware that he was speaking.

"Oh, Barbara, you won't make me go *to-morrow!* You promised——"

"If she promised, we must make her stick to her promise," said Bennett, forgiving the interruption, and perhaps willing to tease Mrs. Bal.

The beautiful Barbara, however, had gathered together her scattered wits, and was too wise to show that she was being teased. "I know, I meant to keep you with me this Edinburgh week anyhow," she answered the girl. "But, sweetest, you won't want to hold me to the promise, no matter what Mr. Bennett or any one else says, if I tell you that I'm worrying over your being here? I don't feel it's the right thing for you. And it's certain Grandma will change her will if she hears you're living with me. It's a miracle I didn't dry up in my part to-night from sheer anxiety and absent-mindedness. You'd hate me to *fail* through you, dear one, I know."

"Oh, yes — anything but that," Barrie exclaimed, tears in her eyes.

Alas, if only some other name than that of M. P. Bennett had added itself to her list of admirers, all might have been well for Barrie with sister Barbara, at least for a little while! As it was, the girl's fate was sealed. So much the better for me: yet my fool of a heart ached for her disappointment, instead of leaping for joy at my own good luck.

Mrs. Bal looked at the girl with an odd expression on her charming face, painted for the stage. There was compunction, if not remorse, in the big brown eyes, but there was no relenting. She liked Barrie and enjoyed her childish adoration, but she loved herself, and she wanted to "land" Morgan Bennett. The girl would have to be sacrificed; still, those rising tears gave Barbara pain to see. She would really have been glad to make Barrie happy, if the creature's youth and beauty had not been an hourly peril for her.

"Don't look so disconsolate, dear," she said. "You're going to have a glorious time. And if wet eyelashes are a compliment to me, they're just the opposite to Mr. Norman."

"Is it Mr. Norman the novelist?" Bennett wanted to know.

"Yes. And he's going to let Barrie help him with a story — or else he's putting her into one, I'm not quite sure which."

Barbara threw him this bit of information with a sweetly casual air, but it was one of the cleverest things she ever did, on the stage or off. Somehow, with a smile that flashed over us all with a special meaning for each — affection for Barrie, a benediction for me, and a secret

understanding for Bennett — she contrived to convey to him the idea that her little sister was already bespoken. No use his being led away by rosebud innocence! It was engaged, and if he were wise he would be true to his love for the full-blown rose.

"Just think, pet, what an honour to be taken about by such famous people as Basil Norman and Aline West," she went on, "and to have them for your best friends. You'd have had a horrid dull time with them gone, for I should have had to leave you alone a lot. And next week, when they bring you back to me at Glasgow, your future will be all beautifully arranged."

"But Mrs. West isn't well enough to go to-morrow ——" Barrie pleaded.

"No. But Mrs. Vanneck will chaperon you for a few days. You ought to be frightfully happy, seeing Scotland with those you love while your poor Barbara works for her daily bread. And now you must go out in front again with Mr. Norman, if you don't want to miss the beginning of the second act. Mr. Bennett has seen it, so he can stop with me five minutes if he likes, till my call."

Barrie had been at rehearsal, and would no doubt have been quite willing to miss any part of the play not graced by Mrs. Bal's presence on the stage; but short as was the time since she made her mother's acquaintance, she had learned to know the lady well enough to realize when she was not wanted. She went with me like a lamb resigned to the slaughter; and so, I was sure, would she start with us next day. But just here, I think, is the place to write down what had meanwhile happened to Mrs. James. If it hadn't been for that happening, perhaps

we should not, after all, have snatched the girl away so easily from Somerled. And the funny thing was — for it had its funny side, as even he must have seen — the funny thing was, that all was his own fault. When he planned that wonderful surprise for Mrs. James, he little thought it would be the means of stealing his trump card from him. Generous he may be, and is, I must admit; but it's not likely that he would have been unselfish enough to put himself in a hole for Mrs. James's happiness, especially as he could have got just as much credit from Barrie by waiting a few weeks — say, until the end of the "heather moon."

To have brought in the "surprise" in its proper order, I should have worked it into my notes between our sightseeing expedition in the afternoon, and the theatre in the evening, for it was common property by that time. We all knew (from Mrs. James, not from himself, what a noble, magnificent, wonderful, glorious, altogether pluperfect fellow Somerled was, to have interested himself in her behalf, and to have given her such happiness as all her friends had thought her mad to dream of through the dreary years.

Always, it seems, she believed that her husband, who disappeared seventeen years ago, was alive, and only waiting for success to crown his ambitions, before returning to her. Everybody else thought he had drowned himself, because of some professional trouble. But Mrs. James's faith has been the great romance of her life; and Barrie (or the little woman herself, I don't know which) told Somerled the story the day they left Carlisle in his car. Some details caught his attention, and made him wonder

if Mrs. James's instinct were not more right than other people's reason.

When Somerled went to America as a boy, he travelled in the steerage. On board the same ship was a man calling himself James Richard, a man of something over thirty, in whom Somerled became interested. They made friends, though they gave each other no intimate confidences; and James Richard made one or two remarks which suggested that he had been a doctor. Evidently he was a man of culture, interested in many things, including chemistry and Scottish history. After landing in New York the two met occasionally by appointment, and the older man spoke of an invention which, if he could get the help of some millionaire to perfect it, ought to make his fame and fortune, and revolutionize anæsthetics; but Somerled had thought little of this at the time. So many men he met in those days had queer fads by means of which they hoped to achieve glory. Soon, even before he himself reached success, Somerled and James Richard drifted apart. The rising artist forgot the ship-acquaintance with whom, owing to the difference in their ages and interests, he had never had more than casual acquaintance. It was not until he heard the story of Mrs. James's husband, the clever doctor who loved Scottish history and had invented a new anæsthetic just before disappearing seventeen years ago, that he remembered his shipmate, James Richard. Then he recalled his appearance; and the descriptions tallied. A scar on the forehead was a distinguishing mark with the man supposed to have drowned himself and the man who had travelled to America in the steerage. Somerled cabled at once to New York,

instructing a firm of private detectives to trace James Richard, an Englishman, probably a doctor, who had landed in New York from a certain ship on a certain date.

The first reply was not very encouraging. The man had left New York many years ago, and no one knew where he had gone. But the next cablegram brought news that James Richard, or some one answering to the name and description had been tracked to Chicago, There he had practised as a doctor with some success, but had fallen seriously ill, had given up his business, and had again disappeared. The detective "on the job" was going to Colorado to look for him, as the climate of that state had been recommended to Richard by a fellow practitioner.

On the Monday morning after our arrival in Edinburgh, a third message had come. This announced that the doctor had left Colorado and gone to California, where he was now living at Riverside, with a rising practice; but that he was considered a "crank," because he constantly besieged rich men to start a laboratory in which to work out his theories. Two or three had half promised their help, but for some reason or other the financial schemes had fallen through. Still the man never appeared to lose hope. Having received this news, Somerled wired direct to the doctor, offering him as much money as he needed, if, before anything further was settled, he would come over to Scotland and reveal himself to his wife.

Up to this time, Somerled had said nothing to Mrs. James, except that he hoped to give her a pleasant surprise; and told her even this only because she planned to go back to Carlisle, now that Barrie was with her mother. Naturally Somerled had several important rea-

sons for wishing the little woman to stay; but the one, he alleged, was his desire to see what she thought of the "surprise" when it came.

He, of course, must have had visions of keeping this useful queen of spades up his sleeve, that he might be ready to trump one of our knavish tricks with her, at any moment; but the gods fought against him for once. Just before theatre-time, arrived a long cablegram from James Richard, alias Richard James. He thanked Somerled enthusiastically (Mrs. James showed the message to me, and to every one of us), accepted his loan, believing that eventually it could be repaid, and was more than happy to hear news of his wife, whom he had left only for her own good, because at that time he considered himself disgraced and ruined. He had intended suicide, but the thought of his invention had changed his mind and plans at the last moment. He had gone to the new world to find what the old had denied him, and after a hundred disappointments he was to be rewarded, through Somerled. He asked now for nothing better than to return, but only for long enough to see his wife, and take her back to California with him. To his deep regret, however, he could not start at once, as he had broken his leg and would not be able to travel for several weeks at least. Would she come to him as soon as she could settle her affairs?

I imagine Somerled must have been sorely tempted not to show this message, for it would rob him of Mrs. James and leave him where he had been after his quarrel with Aline, minus a chaperon for Barrie, if he could contrive to snatch the girl from Mrs. Bal. But he had said too much about the "surprise" to suppress developments

now. Besides, it would have been almost inhuman to delay the meeting of the husband and wife, so long parted. Neither would have forgiven him if he had coolly kept them apart for his own convenience; but so grateful, so adoring to her hero was Mrs. James, that if "the doctor" had not been ill and needing her, I think of her own free will she would have offered to stop in Edinburgh for a few days to "see what happened." As it was, there was no question of her staying. She and Somerled arranged that she should leave for Carlisle by the first train possible in the morning. At home she was to settle her few affairs temporarily, and catch a quick ship for New York, whence she would hurry on to California.

Somerled gave her advice for the journey (and perhaps something more substantial), but he must have seen that, though virtue might be its own reward, he was unlikely to get any other. Mrs. Bal had lent Barrie to us, and without a woman to aid and abet him, it seemed to me that he was powerless. Such chaperons as Mrs. James don't grow on blackberry bushes even in Scotland, where blackberries, if not gooseberries, are the best in the world. Somerled had done for himself.

Oh, there was no doubt of it this time! Not only had we, in the game of chess we were quietly playing with him, got his little white queen in check; we had swept her off the board.

. . . . . .

Happenings began thick and fast the morning after.

The first thing I heard was, from Aline, that at the theatre last night (probably just after she sent us away) Mrs. Bal had told Morgan Bennett in so many words that

Barrie was practically engaged to me. After a week's trip in my society it was to be expected that she would arrive in Glasgow to ask her elder sister's blessing.

This, Aline thought, necessitated our getting off at once, lest Bennett should contrive to meet the girl alone somehow, and question her. If he did this, the "fat would be in the fire" for Mrs. Bal, and perhaps for me too.

"The sooner the better," said I; for I was impatient to spirit the girl away from Somerled, and turn her thoughts from him to me. If I prayed to the heather moon for help, I felt that I ought to succeed; for the man who can have a girl of eighteen to himself (not counting a few chaperons lying about loose) in a motor-car for a week, passing through the loveliest country in the world, and can't make her forget for his sake some other fellow she's known only a few hours longer, must be a born duffer. This I dinned into my consciousness.

It was to be my first real chance with Barrie; and though never in my life before have I made serious love to any flesh-and-blood girl, I've made so much with my pen to the most difficult and diverse heroines, that I had a certain belief in my own powers, once they had free play.

The second thing that happened this morning of happenings, however, was a slight setback, just enough of a setback to let me see that the heather moon is a goddess who exacts more wooing from her votaries than I had given. Or else, that she has her favourites, and is more ready to look with a kindly eye on a man born to the heather than one who comes from afar to write it up.

Barrie, it appeared, had had a "scene" with Barbara. She had insisted with tears and (according to Mrs. Bal)

stampings of foot, that she *would* go to the Waverley station with Mrs. James and see her off for Carlisle.

Mrs. James was to be taken to the train by Somerled, in his car; and as no one but Barrie had been invited, this meant that the girl would return with him alone. To be sure, it would not take five minutes for the Gray Dragon to slip from the Waverley end of Princes Street back to the Caledonian. On the other hand, it was evident that Mrs. James must have a special reason for choosing the Waverley station, when she could just as well have gone from our own; and Aline and I could see only one. Somerled wanted to snatch five minutes alone with Barrie; and he was not the man to waste a single one of the five. The question was, what use did he intend to make of his time? None of us could guess, for Somerled is a puzzle too hard to read. Not even Aline (who was so nervous that, figuratively speaking, she started at every sound in the enemy's camp) believed that Somerled would try to run away with the girl. I soothed her by saying that I thought it very doubtful whether Somerled would ask the girl to marry him, even if everything were in his favour. I still tried to believe that in his opinion she was too young and had seen too little of life to settle down as a married woman. He might be in love with her — to me it was beginning to seem impossible that a man could know her and not be in love — but with a strong, self-controlled man of Somerled's calibre, falling in love and marrying need not be the same thing.

Mrs. Bal, after the "scene" (in which she too, apparently, played a stormy part) had angrily consented to give Barrie her own way, but only on the girl's threat to

decline making the trip with us, if thwarted. Something in Barrie's eyes had warned the lady not to go too far, and on her promise to return directly Mrs. James had gone, Mrs. Bal sulkily waived her objections.

"Why don't you, too, see Mrs. James off?" suggested Aline. "You've been great friends. She ought to be complimented. And you might take her some flowers. That would please Barrie, who is now worshipping Ian as a tin saint on wheels because he has found Mrs. James's husband and offered to finance him to success. You ought to do *something*."

I thought this a good idea, and on the top of it had one of my own, which I didn't mention to Aline, lest it should fail. Not only did I buy flowers, the prettiest and most expensive I could find (worthy of Barrie or Mrs. Bal), but a box of sweets, another of Scotch shortbread, a few cairngorm brooches, and amethyst and silver thistles picked up at random, and a copy of Aline's and my last book which I found (well displayed) on the station bookstall. When Aline sees only one copy she will not buy it, as she thinks it a pity the book should disappear from public view; but this was an occasion of importance, and I didn't hesitate to pluck the last fruit from the bough.

When Mrs. James, Barrie, and Somerled arrived (Vedder being left in charge of the car) there was I waiting, laden with offerings. I stuck to the party till the end, waving my farewell as the train slowly moved out, and then I summoned up courage (or impudence, depending on the point of view) to ask if Somerled would take me back. "I walked here," I said, "so as to do my little

shopping for Mrs. James, and I came so fast I've hardly got my breath back."

I was prepared for some excuse to keep me out of the car; but I wronged Somerled. If any one looked disappointed it was Barrie, not he. He said, "Certainly; with pleasure," and there was nothing in his voice to contradict the courtesy of his words.

Thus, with surprising ease, I robbed him of the five minutes alone with Barrie which he had planned. And though she sat in front with him — as she had come, perhaps — and I was alone in my glory behind, they could have no private conversation.

When I went up to bid Aline good-bye (we were starting soon for Linlithgow and Stirling), I told her of my small triumph; but it gave her no great pleasure.

"How do we know what he said to the girl going to the train?" she asked suspiciously. "If there's anything up, it's certain that James woman is in it. I'm sure she's warned Ian against you and me as well as Mrs. Bal. She's as shrewd as a gimlet in her own funny way. You've remarked that yourself. And she worships Ian, and thinks Barrie a little angel abandoned in a wicked world. So if Ian wanted to talk, he wouldn't mind Mrs. James. You'd better keep your eyes open this week, and notice whether the girl seems dreamy and absent-minded, as if she expected something to happen — something they may have arranged between them this morning."

I assured Aline that I needed no urging to keep my eyes on Barrie. She then told me for the second time that she intended joining our party as soon as Somerled left Edinburgh to follow us, as — she thought — he surely

would. "He wouldn't have gone a step while that girl was here with Mrs. Bal," she exclaimed, almost fiercely, "but in spite of all he's said about seeing old landmarks and looking up old friends, he'll be off after you when you've taken Barrie away. Anyhow, I'm going to see something of him while he's here if I can, for we are friends! He's supposed to have forgiven me, and he can't refuse to come and cheer up the invalid. I shall do the very best I can for myself — and when I find he means to be off I shall mention casually, as a kind of coincidence, that I'm going too, the same day, to join you; that you've wired or something, and that Maud Vanneck and her husband have accepted an invitation from Morgan Bennett to visit his sister, at that Round House Mrs. Bal talked of. Perhaps Ian will offer to take me with him. I do hope so. But I can't ask."

As a matter of fact, poor Aline had racked her brains how to dispose of the married Vannecks when she should be ready to take her place in Blunderbore. As for George, she wished to keep and play with him, of course, partly for her own amusement, partly for the moral effect upon Somerled; but she didn't want to offend his brother and sister-in-law. Still, they had to be got rid of eventually, as Blunderbore, with all the faults of Noah's ark, has not the ark's accommodation for man and beast. It was a happy thought to angle for an invitation, through Mrs. Bal, for a few days at the Round House, as Maud Vanneck particularly desired to see "Scottish life in a private family"; and it didn't occur to her that a shooting-lodge hired by an American millionaire would not be the ideal way of accomplishing her object.

Mrs. Bal was not out of her room when we were ready to start, at eleven, so I did not see her again; but the plainest, oldest, and carrotiest of the three red-headed maids primly accompanied Barrie to the hotel door with hand-luggage. By this time Blunderbore was puffing heavily in feigned eagerness to be off, and Salomon, its owner and chauffeur, shabby and sulky as usual, was giving the car a few last oily caresses which should have been bestowed long ago in the privacy of the garage. Have I forgotten to mention in these rambling notes that Somerled's Vedder regards our Salomon with a silent yet plainly visible contempt, akin to nausea? Whenever they happen to be thrown together for a few minutes I see the smart-liveried Vedder criticizing with his mysterious eyes the mean features of the weedy Salomon; his weak face with the curious, splay mouth that falls far apart in speaking, almost as if the jaw were broken; his old cloth cap, and his thin, short figure loosely wrapped in a long, linen dust coat. Neither Aline nor I have had the courage to remonstrate with Salomon on his get up, but when Vedder regards him I burn with the desire to discharge the creature and his car, despite our contract for a month.

Barrie and I being on the spot, we could have got off, if the Vannecks — invariably late — had not been missing. In desperation I dashed into the hotel to look for them, and returned to find Somerled deep in conversation with Barrie, who was in the car. I had left her standing in the hotel doorway, with Mrs. Bal's maid: so Somerled in some way must have caused that maid to disappear, and had then forestalled me by helping Barrie into my

car, tucking her comfortably in with the prettier of my two rugs.

I was just in time to hear him say "we shall meet" — but where and when the meeting was to be, I did not know. That was the last of him for the moment, however, as I had secured the two Vannecks, and we lumbered off along the good, clear road to Linlithgow. Now it was "up to me" to make my running with Barrie.

I like driving, though in traffic I am secretly nervous; but as Blunderbore provides no convenient perch for the chauffeur, and as Salomon trusts no man except himself, he took the wheel, and I was free to sit behind with my three guests.

I'd been wondering what Barrie's mood would be, for I felt in my bones that she was coming with us much against her will. She had not wanted to leave Edinburgh, and I was sure that she could only have resigned herself to doing so with Somerled and his Gray Dragon. I asked myself whether she guessed, or whether Mrs. James had put it into her head, that Aline and I had combined against what the girl no doubt believed to be her "interests." I thought it not improbable that she would openly show her distaste for the trip. As we went on, however, I began to realize that Barrie had changed subtly in the days since meeting her mother. She seemed suddenly to have grown up, to have become a woman.

Was it the heart-breaking disappointment Mrs. Bal's reception had given her? Or was it the five proposals of marriage flung at her head by those mad young men who were now — thank goodness! — being left behind us, to "dree their own wierds?" Or was it something quite

different — something which she and the heather moon alone knew?

In any case, she was quiet, even dignified in her youthful way, very polite and agreeable to the Vannecks and to me. I might have flattered myself that she was happy enough, and glad of my society, if I hadn't reflected that to sulk visibly would have been to blame Mrs. Bal. Already I knew that loyalty was one of Barrie's everyday virtues. Barbara could do no wrong!

While the road (though good, and historic every step of the way) remained unalluring to the eye, we chatted about Edinburgh, Barrie rejoicing in having seen as much as she had before leaving the town. She had browsed a little among the thrilling shops of Princes Street. With one eye, so to speak, cocked up at the towering Castle Rock, with the other she had scanned the gardens, Scott's monument, and everything else worth seeing; then, with a sudden pounce, she had concentrated her gaze on immense plate glass windows displaying Scottish jewellery, Scottish books, Scottish cakes, and (to her) irrelevant Scottish tartans. Even without need of them, their witching attraction had hypnotized her to buy many of these things.

"I don't know exactly what I shall do with them," she said; "but I'm glad I've got them all, and I wish I had more!"

It was Mrs. James who had been with her in her triumphal progress through Princes Street; but it was I who had escorted her the whole wonderful, sordid, glorious, pitiful length of the old High Street, the Royal Mile of gorgeous ghosts. I had been there to see her face as she

caught glimpses of dark wynds where long ago men had fought to the death and helped make history, where now colourful yet faded rags hang like ancient banners, from iron frames, giving a fantastic likeness to side streets of Naples: I had pointed out to her the stones which marked the place where famous ones had murdered or been murdered, or had sought sanctuary from murder. I had taken her all over the house of John Knox. Together we had admired the oak carving in the room where he ate his simple meals; and together we looked from the little window whence he had poured his burning floods of eloquence upon the heads of the crowd below. In the curiosity shop downstairs I had bought her a silver Heart of Midlothian. She had stared into the rich dark shadows whence start out, spirit-like, faces of old oil pictures, faces of old clocks, faces of old marble busts; and she had been so charmed by the soft voice of the young saleswoman, whose flute-like tones would lure gold from a miser's pocket, that she would have collected half the things in the shop if she had had the money. I wanted to give her bits of old jewellery and miniatures of Queen Mary and Prince Charlie which she fancied, but she would accept only the silver Heart of Midlothian, which cost no more than a few shillings; and to-day, as I took her away from Edinburgh, she was not wearing the little ornament, as I had hoped she might.

As the road grew prettier, we tore our thoughts away from Edinburgh, and gave them to the highway illumined by history. At least, Barrie gave hers, while I lent as many of mine as I could spare from her. And I had

to keep my wits about me, if I were to live up to the regulation of Know-All I'd evidently attained in her eyes.

In Linlithgow we expected to see at once the famous palace where Queen Mary was born, but nothing was visible in what the French would call the *place*, except the Town House, a new statue, and a graceful copy of an old fountain. We had to turn up an unpromising side street to find at last a beautiful little gateway between dumpy octagonal towers, such as the old masters loved to put in the background of their pictures. Passing through was like walking into one of those pictures, getting round the hidden corner as one always longs to do on canvas. Before our eyes rose majestically the colossal shell of a palace, with carved golden walls, a vast courtyard, cyclopean round towers, and wonderful windows full of sky and dreams. Close by was the noble church where James IV had his vision warning him not to go to war with England.

Somerled had talked to Barrie about Linlithgow, doubtless in the hope of making her think of him when there. He had called it the "finest domestic architectural ruin in all Scotland," and told her of Lord Rosebery's suggestion to restore and make of it a great national museum. I was glad for every reason that Somerled wasn't with us, and, for one, because he would have overshadowed me entirely with his knowledge of architecture, which he contrives to use picturesquely, not ponderously. All I could do was to rhapsodize in a way Barrie likes well enough when she can get nothing better, painting for her a rough word-picture of the palace in days when rich gilding still glittered on the quaint wall statues, when crystal jets spouted from the lovely fountain, green with moss

now as with thick verdigris — when knights in armour rode into the quadrangle to be welcomed by fair ladies, while varlets led tired horses to distant stables. Those were the days when the Livingstons were keepers of the palace for the King, long before they lost their lands and titles for love of Prince Charlie; days when the memory of Will Binnock was honoured still, that "stout earle" who helped wrest Linlithgow from English Edward's men by smuggling soldiers into the palace precincts, concealed in a load of hay.

We wandered almost sadly through the splendid rooms where Queen Mary first saw the light, the week her father died: through "the King's room," with its secret staircase under a trap door, and its view over a blue lake where swans floated like winged water-lilies. Then, when we had bought a specially bound copy of "Marmion" (which ought to be read at Linlithgow), and post cards and souvenirs that seemed important at the moment and useless afterward, we took the road to Stirling.

There was no time to stop in Falkirk (when is there ever time to stop in motoring?), for the car was running unusually well for Blunderbore. So instead of pausing to meditate over battle scenes, as Vanneck pretended he wished to do, we sailed through the long, straight street which seems practically to constitute the town. Here we had almost our first glimpse of industrial Scotland as opposed to picturesque Scotland, which was in these August days becoming the playground of Britain and America. Falkirk is a coalfield as well as a battlefield, and the murk of collieries and iron works darkens the sky as once did the smoke of gunpowder: but the place holds

its old interest for the mind; and not far off we came to the Wallace Monument; then to Bannockburn. Because of Barrie's love for the Bruce, we got out and walked to the Bore Stone where he stood to direct the battle so fatal to the English. After this we were close to St. Ninian's, and to Stirling, though the day was still young; but there was lots to see, and I wanted to go on before dusk, to spend the night in Crieff. We lunched at one of those nice old-fashioned hotels whose heraldic names alone are worth the money; and as we started on foot to walk through the ancient town and mount to its high crown, the Castle, I began to appreciate Aline's arrangements for my benefit.

Maud Vanneck being a model of wifely jealousy, kept Fred to herself, and Barrie was my companion. This was delightful. No such good thing had come to me since making her acquaintance. On the way up the quaint, steep street, there came a shower of rain, and I had to shelter her with my umbrella. It was an umbrella of blessedly mean proportions, which meant that she must keep close to my side, and I said, "Come what may I shall have this and a few other things to remember!"

Up in the Castle, we two decided that we had after all made a mistake in calling Edinburgh Castle Scotland's heart. Here was that organ, and we could almost feel it throbbing under our feet. We forgot that we had selected several other hearts for Scotland. Here was the right one at last!

What a view to look out upon, with the One Girl by your side! Over our heads and far away, clouds turned the rolling mountains to snowpeaks that dazzled in the

sun, and under our eyes seemed to lie all Scotland, spread out like a vast brocaded mantle of many colours: the plain of the Forth, the Ochil hills and the hills of Fife; the purple peaks round Loch Lomond, and here and there a glitter of water like broken glass on a floor of gold. Ten counties we could see, and eight great battlefields which helped to make Scotland what it is. The horizon was carved in shapes of azure — strange, wild, mountainous shapes; and the noble heads of Ben Lomond, Ben Ledi, and Ben A'an were laurelled and jewelled for us by memories of Scott.

Sitting where Queen Mary sat on her velvet cushions, and looking through her peephole in the thick stone wall, I was almost irresistibly tempted to make love to Barrie. My heart so went out to her that it seemed she must respond: and the Vannecks had wandered to another part of the battlements; but she kept me to my task of cicerone. I had to answer a dozen questions. I had to tell her about Agricola forging his chain of forts across the narrow land between the Clyde, and the Forth "that bridles the wild Highlander." She would be satisfied with nothing less than the unabridged stories of Edward I's siege of this "gray bulwark of the North," the murder of the powerful Douglas by his treacherous host King James II; the building of and the mysterious curse upon Mar's Work, and twenty other human documents not half so moving, had she but known it, as the story of Basil Norman's first and only love. Once or twice I thought she guessed that I wished to speak of myself and her, and that she deliberately held me at arm's length, like a young person of the world dealing with an ineligible at the end of

her second season. I almost hated King Edward, and more especially Agricola!

Then, worst of all, before we had half finished our tour of the Castle and its wonders, rain began to fall out of one cloud stationed directly over our heads in the midst of a sun-bright sky. I could almost have believed that Somerled in spite had sent it after us, like a wet blood-hound to track us down. We took shelter in the room where the Douglas was murdered; and who could make love against such a background? Not I: though perhaps gay King James V might have been equal to it. One does not hear that any ghost dogged his footsteps as he crept joyously in disguise out from that dark little chamber into the subterranean passage, which led the "Guid man of Ballangeich" to his Haroun Al-raschid adventures in the night.

. . . . . .

The next few days live in my memory as dreams live. They were beautiful. They would have been more beautiful if I could have flattered myself that Barrie was learning to care for me in the way she might have cared for Somerled, if we had left them in peace. But she was always the same — except that, as the world grew more enchanting in beauty and poetic associations, she blossomed into a sweet expansiveness, losing the reserve in which she had been veiled when first we started.

It ought to have been ideal, this moving from scene to scene with the one girl I ever wanted for my own, since I was thirteen and worshipped a tank mermaid in green spangles. That was the hard part! It ought to have

been ideal and — it wasn't. I should think a rather well meaning Saracen chieftain who had captured a Christian maiden might have felt somewhat as I felt from day to day. He had got her. She couldn't escape from him and his fortress; but, even with her hand in his, she contrived to elude him.

So it was with me. Old Blunderbore went well on the whole, not counting a few minor ailments of second childhood which attacked him occasionally when he saw a stiff hill ahead, or when he had heard me say I was in a hurry. The Vannecks were perfection as chaperons, not through supernatural tact and unselfishness, but because Maud feared the effect upon Fred of too much Barrie. She laid herself out to charm her husband. Never an "I told you so!" Never a nagging word or look. She chatted to Fred in the car, and saw sights with him out of the car. This, she said, was almost like a second honeymoon. But of the heather moon she had never heard. It was ours — Barrie's and mine: yet I could not induce the girl to speak of it. For all she would say, she might have forgotten its existence. Always, especially when the heather moon tried to give us its golden blessing, an invisible presence seemed to stand between us, as if Somerled had sent his astral body to keep us apart.

As to Somerled in the flesh, there was a mystery at this time. To me at Perth came a telegram from Aline saying:

"S. has left his car and chauffeur here and gone away without a word to any one. Has he come after you? Wire immediately."

I obeyed, replying:

"Seen and heard nothing of S. Will let you have all news. Hope you will do the same by me. Am sending you our route, but suppose you will arrive in few days."

Her answer came to St. Andrews, at a jolly, golfing sort of hotel where I ought to have been as happy as the day was long.

"As S. has not joined you prefer stop on here. Eyes not well yet. Mr. Bennett's sister has influenza. She would prefer Maud and Fred visit Round House later — say toward end of next week."

I had no faith in that attack of influenza. The microbe was probably hatched in conversation between Aline and Mrs. Bal, who had by this time become tremendous allies. My theory was that Aline, knowing Somerled not to be near Barrie, had settled down to enjoy the fleeting moment. She might not be happy, but I could unde stand that the society of Mrs. Bal (who evidently wanted her) was preferable to motoring with a brother, and a girl of whom she was jealous.

The same day came a long expensive wire to Barrie from her mother:

"So sorry darling but unfortunately must put you off. Don't come first of Glasgow week. Wait till Saturday, arriving late afternoon or evening. Mrs. West says her friends and brother will like keeping you till then so you needn't worry. We can have nice visit together later and settle everything for you in some delightful way. Making plans now. Don't forget you for a moment. Best reasons for delay. Will explain when we meet. Sending you

letter with little present of money. Don't stint yourself. Write often. Tell me all that interests you. Ever your loving Barbara."

"Why do you suppose she can't have me the first of the week?" Barrie asked piteously, when she had shown this message.

"I can't say, I'm sure," I cautiously replied. This was literally true. I could not say: but I could guess. And a letter from Aline which came two or three days later, confirmed my Sherlockian deductions.

"My DEAR OLD BOY" [she wrote]: "I was so glad to get your telegram, and meant to have written at once, but waited on second thoughts to have a little more news. It is a relief to know that Ian hasn't followed that girl. Of course I feel it as much for your sake as my own, for he is a dangerous rival to any man. It *is* odd where he can have gone; though he may turn up here again any day, as he has left his car and chauffeur. If he had wanted to be nice, he might have offered me the use of both while he was away; but I suppose he blames me for lending myself to Mrs. Bal's wishes about Barrie. Very unreasonable of him, as you have a perfect right to do what you like with the car you've hired, and if Mrs. Bal didn't want her daughter to see too much of *him*, what fault is it of mine?

"I try to amuse myself as well as I can and forget my worries, however, and Mrs. Bal and Morgan Bennett are being very nice. I don't think he's proposed yet, or she would have told me, for we're great friends; but she's pretty sure to land him before he leaves for America, as he is to do the end of her Glasgow week, for a short business trip. I expect to be asked to congratulate them the night before he sails! What a good thing for her

and *every one* that the Vannecks can stand by you longer than we planned. I think, unless you wire me that Ian has appeared upon the scene, I'll stay with Mrs. Bal for her Glasgow week, as she has invited me, and then, when the Vannecks go to the Round House, you can bring Barrie back to her mother."

This explained Mrs. Bal's "best of reasons."

Days went on, and Somerled did not come to our part of the world, which was by this time the heart of the Highlands; but I felt in my bones that Barrie was hearing from him, writing to him; that she knew what I did not know, the mystery of his absence. Of course I could have found out if she were receiving letters from him, for Somerled's handwriting is unmistakable; but villain or no villain, I had to draw the line somewhere, and I drew it at spying upon her.

Aline did go to Glasgow with Mrs. Bal. She wrote to tell me how, with Morgan Bennett in his biggest motor-car, "*much* higher powered and smarter than poor Ian's," she and Mrs. Bal and George Vanneck had sped away from Edinburgh on Sunday morning early, had a look at their rooms in Glasgow, and dashed on to Arrochar, where they all stopped till Monday afternoon.

"Such an exquisite road!" [said Aline]. "You would have loved it. High green bank on one side, with cataracts of bracken delicate as maidenhair; dark rocks, wrapped in velvet moss. Trees holding up screens of green lace between your eyes and the blue water of the loch. Pebbles white and round as pearls, or silver coins dropped by fairies in a big "flit." That's one of *your* similes! Grass running down to the edge of the water, and full of bluebells.

Water the colour of drowned wallflowers. I don't believe your Highland lochs can be prettier or more idyllic, though this is so close to Glasgow.

"We have had a day going through the Kyles of Bute, too — the same party: and a marvellous run along the shores of the Clyde to Skelmorlie. Such red rocks there, and even the sand red. There was a pink haze over everything, like a perpetual sunset. I'm not sure which was better, that, or a trip to Crinan. The dearest little place at the end of the Crinan canal — just a flower-draped hotel, and a sea-wall and a lighthouse, with a distant murmur of 'Corrievrechan's tortured roar,' mingled with the crying of gulls. What a place for you and Barrie to spend your honeymoon! You see, I speak as if it were certain. Anyhow, I'm sure it all depends on yourself. *Courage, mon brave!*"

But that is exactly the quality which the villain of the piece lacks at present.

# BOOK IV

# WHAT BECAME OF BARRIE

# I

## LETTER FROM BARRIE MACDONALD TO IAN SOMERLED MACDONALD

DEAR SIR KNIGHT: I was glad the morning we saw Mrs. James off that you said you'd like to hear from me, and if I needed help or comfort in any trouble I must let you know. I haven't such an excuse for writing to you now, but you did say that you wanted to hear anyway, and that you'd find out where we were going, so you could wire me your plans. Now I've had two telegrams from you, and a letter; and if they hadn't come I should have been disappointed. I thought we might have seen you and the Gray Dragon before this, but the telegrams have made me understand. That is, I *don't* understand, because what you tell me sounds very mysterious. Still, as you went back to Carlisle and are now in London, it is no use hoping to see the Gray Dragon's bonnet flash into sight round some complicated Highland corner

"What *could* have taken you to call on Grandma again? I am almost dying of curiosity. You say 'perhaps you may be able to explain when we meet': but everybody is saying that to me, just now — at least, Barbara is, about not letting me go back to Glasgow till the end of her week there — so it is rather aggravating. Still, it is good to know that we may meet. I wonder when? You don't

give me a hint, and it stirs up my curiosity from deeper depths to be told, as if you half expected me to guess what you mean, that 'you're in London for reinforcements.' Shall I ever know? It seems a long time since I said good-bye to you in front of the Caledonian Hotel. Not that I'm having a dull trip. I should be very dull myself if that were true, for everything is beautiful, and every one kind. It is the most wonderful luck for a girl like me, who had never seen anything in her life, suddenly to be seeing all Scotland. But I had grown rather *used* to seeing things with you and Mrs. James, after I escaped from the 'glass retort,' and I can't accustom myself yet to being with others, and you far away — Mrs. James too, of course. I try to console myself if I feel a tiny bit homesick, thinking how happy she is, and how wonderful everything is going to be for her and her strange, unpractical doctor. It was splendid of you to give him all that money. But wouldn't it have been fun if he could have come over, instead of her going to him? Maybe, if it had turned out so, you would be in the Highlands now.

"Do you remember how I used to say that *my* tour under the heather moon would soon be over, but you would be going on just as if we had never met? Well, it has turned out quite differently, hasn't it, for both of us? Only the heather moon is the same. But I never talk of her now that you are gone.

"I don't want you to think I am ungrateful to *any one*, if I sign myself, Your rather homesick little 'princess,'

"Barrie.

"P. S. — It does not seem right to have crossed over the borderline into our Highlands without you!"

LETTER FROM BARRIE TO HER MOTHER

"DEAREST, DARLING BARBARA: Can it really be that it won't bother you to have me write to you often and tell you everything interesting that happens? You see, I might think it interesting, and you might think it a bore. I know you are easily bored, dear, so I am not quite sure what I ought to write. I can only tell you about seeing places, because that is all we do. But they are so beautiful, perhaps you may like to hear. If I write about the wrong things, do promise that you'll speak out and tell me to stop. I won't let my feelings be hurt.

"Basil is trying to show me as much of Scotland as he possibly can, he says, before I 'get tired of him and Blunderbore.' That is a bad way to put it, and so I have told him, because I should be horribly ungrateful to tire of him. But he says he dislikes gratitude and thinks it an overestimated virtue.

"I suppose you have often been in Scotland before, and you are not Scottish yourself, so perhaps you can't quite feel as I do about it. Basil, who has travelled so much, says that Scotland has in miniature almost all the picked bits of scenery of other countries; but they do not *appear* to be in miniature when you're motoring through them. They seem on an enormous scale; and each beauty spot is different from every other. You can't help remembering and keeping them apart in your mind, though there are so many that they are crowded together, all over the map. I think of the map of Scotland being purple, like heather, don't you? And if I have to live anywhere else, I shall always be homesick for this country now. If we are not in

some fairy-like, green glen, we are in a wild and awesome mountain pass; or else in a blue labyrinth of lochs; or we come out upon endless, billowing moorlands; or suddenly we find ourselves on a long road like an avenue in some great private park, with the singing of a river in our ears.

"Poor Basil sometimes feels ashamed of Blunderbore, and certainly it *is* different from travelling in Mr. Somerled's Gray Dragon. With the Dragon, spirits of the wind used to rush out of forests to meet and dash ozone in our faces. With Blunderbore, if they come at all, they merely spray us lazily.

"Going from Stirling to Crieff we crossed the borderline of the Highlands. There was a park-like world round the Bridge of Allan: and at Ardoch, the greatest Roman station left in Britain, lots of turfed banks showing still where 26,000 Romans tried to bridle the Northern Caledonians, the red-haired people. I'm glad they never quite succeeded!

"Crieff was sweet, and all round it, half hidden in woods, the most beautiful houses. But Basil had forgotten to wire, so we couldn't get into one of the nice hotels, but stayed in a very funny one. When Mrs. Vanneck asked for communicating rooms, the landlady said, 'Oh, *no*, Madam, we've no such things as *that* in *our* house!'

"We went on to Perth early next morning, and every minute along the road we seemed to be passing happy people who'd come to play in Scotland: nice golfing girls and men, and men with guns over their shoulders, or followed by gillies with fishing-tackle. I wish men could amuse themselves, though, don't you, without killing creatures more beautiful and happy than themselves?

"It was such a pretty road, past Methven, where, alas! the English beat Bruce; and if I hadn't been grieved to find that by John Knox's advice all the nicest buildings had been pulled down, I shouldn't have felt disappointed in Perth. It is a very fine town anyhow, with glorious trees; and the two great bridges over the Tay are splendid if they *are* made of iron. They look as if people had planned them especially to give all the view there could be of the sunset.

"Of course the 'Fair Maid's' house was the most interesting thing. I hope it really was hers. I don't see why not. It *is* in the old glover's quarter. And the shrine with the crucifix and death's head and cross-bones they found hidden in the wall of her room is too fascinating. I could just see her praying there, so beautiful that all the young men of Perth were in love with her. And talking of the young men of Perth, Basil says the ball in the Games Week is supposed to be the best show of the year — such splendid men come. I should love to see them in the kilt, with their brown knees, like the pipers in Edinburgh.

"St. Andrews was our next place, and we arrived the same day, for we didn't stop in Perth after we had seen the sights there. I wonder if you have been to St. Andrews? I know so little about you yet, dearest. I fell in love with the place — not so much with the links (though they must be the most beautiful as well as the most famous in the world) as with that old ruined castle built on the dark rocks rising out of the sea. I know I shall dream of the awful, bottle-necked dungeon! Basil said it was the worst thing he had ever seen except at Loches. I hope it isn't wicked to be pleased that Cardinal Beaton, after he

sat in his window to watch Wishart burn, was soon killed, and salted, and preserved in the same dungeon where he used to keep martyrs. The 'undergrads' of the University looked so attractive in their red gowns, and the girl students in their mortar boards! They were like scarlet birds, against the gray walls and gray arches of the town. But I suppose people in St. Andrews think even more about golf than about learning, don't they? There were hundreds of all ages on the links — so grave and eager: and at the hotels they *never* know when anybody will come in to meals. There's the cemetery, too; that shows the importance of golf. All the 'smartest' monuments are of famous golfers, knitted caps and clubs and everything, neatly done in marble. But I wonder anybody ever contrives to die at St. Andrews. I never felt such delicious air!

"Crossing the ferry for Dundee was fun. It was a very big boat, and several other motors on it as well as ours. We sat in Blunderbore all the way across the wide sheet of silver that was the Tay, gazing up at the marvellous giant bridge, and then we spent several hours in Dundee, seeing the Steeple, and Queen Mary's Orchard, and lots of things. This was so near the Round House that I suppose the Vannecks would have gone if it hadn't been for me. But I am the stumbling block in everybody's way.

"Going on to Aberdeen, we ran along a fine coast dotted with ruined castles — Dunottar for one, where the Regalia was hidden once.

"We stopped at Arbroath, which Doctor Johnson admired, to see the great shell of an Abbey, red as dried blood; and all the old town is built out of it, so no wonder

there isn't much left but an immense nave. But just think, Arbroath is Sir Walter Scott's 'Fairport,' and I must read "The Antiquarian" again, all about the caves and the secret treasure found in them. As for the treasure of the Abbey, it is nothing less than the heart of William the Lion. He had it nicely buried near the high altar, as long ago as the twelfth century, wasn't it? But in 1810 they dug it up, found it had ossified, and now they simply have it lying about in a glass case, practically mixed up with the bones of a lady who left money to the Abbey (she wouldn't, if she'd known what they'd do!) and the singularly long thigh bones of a particularly wicked earl. It was an earl who married a sister of the Lion's, and, because he was jealous, threw her out of the window.

"We had to go through Montrose, where the great Marquis was born, and where Sir James Douglas set sail with the Bruce's heart (what a lot of hearts there were travelling about then!) and where now the most curiously exciting things are the Bridie Shops. I *had* to know what a 'bridie' meant, so we stopped to see; but it's only a rolled meat pasty they love in Forfarshire; and brides are supposed to batten on them at their weddings. To please me, Basil would have made a detour to see 'Thrums,' which is really Kerriemuir, you know. And we should have had to pass through Forfar — the 'Witches Har' — and go on the road that leads to mysterious, wonderful Glamis. I was longing to do it, but Mrs. Vanneck wanted to arrive in Aberdeen in time to do some shopping! I gave up like a lamb, almost hating her inwardly; but afterward I felt better about it, for the Aberdeen shops are so

nice. They sell pink pearls, out of Scottish rivers — perfect beauties. I bought you a brooch, and I do hope you'll like it. I don't know much about such things; and of course you have gorgeous jewellery; but this pearl is such a wonderful colour, like snow touched with sunrise.

"My eyes and hair were full of granite by the time we got to Aberdeen, because the road is made of it, and the dust sparkles like diamonds.

"So does Aberdeen sparkle like diamonds. I shouldn't have thought a city all gray like that, could be so handsome. But it is a gray bright and silky as the wings of doves, and in some lights pale as moonbeams. Sunset was beginning when we arrived, and on the houses and bridges and river, and even on the pavements of the broad streets, there was the same gray-pink sheen as on the pearl I bought for you.

"In the morning we went to see the University, and the Cathedral with its lovely rose-pink pillars, and old painted Scandinavian ceiling. Everything would have passed off charmingly, if Basil had not begun to be rather foolish and unlike himself, while he and I were in the Cathedral together. Fortunately, an old friend of his he hadn't seen for years, appeared unexpectedly at the critical moment, and invited us to visit him near Aboyne. I hadn't quite time to say 'no' to Basil definitely, and we haven't gone back to the subject since, so I am hoping for the best. I used to think it would be *heavenly* to have a proposal, but now, I realize that it is much overrated.

Your loving BARRIE,

Who hopes she hasn't bored you."

LETTER FROM BARRIE TO SOMERLED

"DEAR SIR KNIGHT: I must write to tell you what a surprise I had in Aberdeen. Basil took us all to a biograph theatre — the first one I ever saw — and one set of pictures was labelled, 'A Gretna Green Wedding of the Olden Days.' How my heart beat! — and not for nothing, because, oh, Sir Knight, it was *our* wedding! My face never showed once, but the hair looked like mine; and *your* face was just like yours and nobody else's, in spite of the old-fashioned costume. Basil said out loud, 'By Jove!' and the Vannecks recognized you, and asked all sorts of questions. I had to tell them the story, but I didn't mind a bit. In fact, I think I was proud. The pictures were coloured, so perhaps that was one reason they guessed, for my hair was so red. I told Basil I always wanted to be married at Gretna Green, and now I *have* been. But he had the air of being rather *shocked*. I shouldn't have thought he was that kind of person.

"Afterward, he was afraid that he had offended me; but I hadn't cared at all. However, he has been kinder than ever since, as if to make up. Walking about in the Cathedral next day, we met a delightful man, actually the *Head of a Clan*, who had been in Canada and had known Basil there. He invited us to visit at his place near Aboyne, on Deeside — just think, not far from where Macbeth was killed! — and of course that enchanted Mrs. Vanneck, who has an insatiable yearning to see the inside of Scottish houses. His is a beautiful house. I must tell you about it. Maybe you remember the road from

Aberdeen to Aboyne, through lovely forests and mountains, and how by and by you come to Deeside, and the Grampians. The Chieftain we went to visit owns a whole mountain, and many miles of land besides; and when you arrive at his estate there are no gates to drive into. You wind on and on, along an exquisite avenue through the woods, and you would not know you were on any one's property if you hadn't been told beforehand, though it is all beautifully kept — not too smart and trim, but just right to be picturesque and romantic. There's no impression of 'This is mine, not yours. *You* are here only on sufferance!' Instead, the trees and hills and heather seem to say gently, 'This is a part of the world where our master lives, because it is lovely and he loves it. He makes you welcome to come and go as you will, whoever you are, as if it were your own.' Don't you think that is a charming impression? And afterward we found out that the doors of this Chieftain's house are never locked. Mostly in the summer they stand wide open all night, although he has beautiful old silver, and quantities of valuable pictures and things which have been in his family more or less ever since there was a Scotland. It is a dear old sixteenth-century house, with networks of black oak beams, and lots of quaint bow-windows that look out on lovely lawns and flower-gardens, and box or holly hedges, and yew trees cut in fantastic shapes.

"We stayed one whole day and two nights. Wasn't it good of him to have us? In all the corridors there are carpets and curtains of the Chieftain's hunting tartan. I loved it. I do hope you have dogs' heads and antlers, and tartan curtains and carpets and things at your castle at

Dhrum? It is yours, you know! I wonder if I shall ever see it?

"I can't tell you how excited I was when the Chieftain and several other Highland men he had staying in his house-party wore the kilt to dinner. All their knees were baked to exactly the right brown; but he was the smartest of the men (though some were very young and handsome), because he, being the head of the Clan, had a green velvet coat. Poor Basil and Mr. Vanneck in their ordinary evening things looked like *nothing at all.* I was quite sorry for them, but so glad I hadn't to sit by one at the table, as I wanted only to talk to the kilted men. I wore that white frock you chose for me — do you remember? — and a sash of the MacDonald of Dhrum dress tartan, which I found in Aberdeen. All during dinner the pipers piped, and I was so thrilled I could scarcely eat. Afterward there was an impromptu dance in a bare, tartan-draped room, where it seemed that Macbeth could quite well have been entertained. I thought I should have to look on, of course, as I've never learned to dance; but that dear Chieftain taught me the 'Petronella,' which is very pretty and easy to pick up. It seems as if one could not help dancing to the music of the pipes; don't you find it so? Queen Mary is supposed to have introduced the Petronella to Scotland, the tallest man with the brownest knees told me; and Francis I brought it from Spain to France. It is quite a Spanish sort of dance, though Scotland has adopted it. I learned a lovely Highland schottische, too; and after I had seen others dancing the reels (ought I to say foursomes or eightsomes?) I tried those too, and got on well, everybody said. But the reel is a dance you can

dance *only* with your own hair. Mine, which I had pinned up very neatly, came down. And one of the girls had a curl come *off*. Luckily she didn't seem to care. She said that accidents would happen on the best regulated heads.

"I do so wonder, by the way, what a Highlander would do if he happened to be born with legs so crooked that he couldn't wear the kilt? I suppose he would have to emigrate when very young, or else stop in bed all his life.

"In the morning a dignified piper named Donal played us awake, walking round and round the house. It delayed my dressing dreadfully, pausing to gaze him out of sight every time he passed under my window. I could have cried when he stopped; but he played more while we had breakfast. I sat next to an Englishman, and would you believe it, the loveliest lament got on his horrid nerves, and he said in a low voice, 'Shall I be able to *live* through it?' If I had been engaged to him I should have broken it off at once.

"The Chieftain has a friend who is a Princess — not a little 'pretend' princess like me, but a real one with a capital 'P' — and he introduced us to her at a big garden party he was having at his place on our day there. 'They are going on to Braemar to-morrow,' he said; and she being as kind and hospitable as he, promptly invited us to lunch with her at Braemar Castle. Mrs. Vanneck was pale with joy!

"We left from the Chieftain's early in the morning, and Donal played us away, on the best run Blunderbore has given us yet, through what I am sure is true Highland scenery. There are castles dotted about everywhere; and I saw my first Highland cattle — adorable little

shaggy beasts with forelocks like sporans, and innocent short faces. Their eyes were so wide apart it seemed that they might be able to see round all the corners. A cherubic bull tried to charge Blunderbore, but changed his mind at the last moment owing to the persuasions of his female friends. The rough, dark brown forms somehow emphasized the beauty of the wild background, the hills painted golden and purple with bracken and heather, the mountains (for there seem always to be mountains in the distance in Scotland) looking exactly the colour of violets against the hyacinth blue of the sky. All sorts of Highland things got in our way, counting deer; and I made up rules for creatures which it would be very useful if they could be taught to obey. 'Bulls kindly requested not to charge motor-cars. No sitting down or cud-chewing allowed in the middle of roads. Deer will please, when darting across, start at least six yards ahead of motors. Chickens will keep to their own side of the road when they have chosen it three times. Rabbits not to run directly ahead of the car for more than three miles at a stretch.'

"As we lumbered along with Blunderbore, each heather-dyed hill that rolled out of our way disclosed a new, or rather a very old, castle. I should think there must be as many castles in this part of the world as there are cottages. I know we saw more! except perhaps those sweet little dwellings grouped together in the charming villages of Ballater and Braemar. No wonder the King and Queen love this part of the world. Basil thought everything here quite foreign-looking: but there's always that French spirit in Scotland, isn't there? I'm sure the coffee is so good just because of that.

"It was fun having luncheon at Braemar Castle, which has more turrets than you can count without knowing it well. Each room nearly has a turret, and some have two: and on the thick wooden shutters names of soldiers quartered in the Castle after Prince Charlie days are roughly carved. Of *course* there's a dungeon, and a secret way to the far-off village and river: and when you enter you have to wind up and up a tower stairway with here and there a little deep-set iron-barred window to give you light. I wish you could see the Princess's Persian dog, Mirzan, of the oldest race of dogs in the world: yellow-white as old ivory, tall and thin and graceful as a blowing plume. He takes strange attitudes like dogs in pictures by old masters; and you feel he can't be real. He must have stepped stealthily out from a dim tapestry hanging on one of the thick stone walls, and he will have to go back to his place beside the sleeping tapestry knight, as soon as he has finished running after the doves, who have left their dovecote and are balancing with their coral feet on the battlements, or walking in the courtyard. Seeing this castle of the Princess's makes me quite envy you having Dunelin. I should like to live in a castle. *Do* buy Dunelin, as you said you sometimes thought of doing, and invite me to be a humble little member of one of your big house-parties. Your deserted princess, BARRIE."

LETTER FROM BARRIE TO HER MOTHER

"DEAREST BARBARA: Every prospect pleases and only man is vile. At least, I don't mean vile, but upsetting. It is too bad about Basil. I don't know what to do. I

hope *you* aren't hoping that I may fall in love with him? Something he said makes me think *he* believes you want it. But why should you? You don't know him and his sister so very well. They aren't old friends. Darling, if I am a bother to you — and I know I am — I'll go far away and change my name and do anything you like, except marry Basil. It isn't that I'm too young. It seems to me if I loved a man desperately I should like to marry him while I was young, so as to give him all my years, and because I should grudge the days and weeks and months lived away from him. But Basil is just like a brother. He might hold my hand all day, and I shouldn't have a single thrill, which he says is the way for a girl to find out whether she's really in love.

"Everything might be so pleasant, if it weren't for this silliness. We have seen Elgin, which has the most exquisite ruined Cathedral that ever lived or died; and sweet Pluscarden Abbey not far off; and Forres, full of memories of Macbeth; and a mysterious carved shaft of sandstone called Sweno's Stone; and the hidden, secret glen of the Findhorn River, where we had to get out, and walk for miles through a gorge of the most entrancing beauty. Sometimes it was wild and grand, sometimes peaceful as a dream of fairyland. Every kind of lovely tree grew there, out of sheer, rocky walls red as coral, or pale and glistening as gray satin; and you looked far down on water brown as the brown of dogs' eyes — deep pools, and a hundred rapids and tiny cataracts filling the glen with their singing. But Mr. and Mrs. Vanneck would walk far ahead of us on the steep narrow paths, which were so slippery I had to let Basil help me, and it was most

embarrassing and futile to keep refusing him all the time. He says we were meant for each other, but I know better!

"You remember, don't you, dear, I didn't want to take this trip? My feeling must have been a presentiment.

"At Culloden Moor I couldn't help crying a little over Prince Charlie and his brave Highlanders, for I think no other battlefield can keep its sadness and romantic pathos, and its effect upon the mind as that does. You know it's almost within sight and sound of the sea; and the voice of the wind among the pines — dark, straight ranks of pines like soldiers in mourning, standing in a bloodstained sea of heather — seemed to me like the wail of ghostly pipes playing a Highland lament. Wandering among the wavy graves and piled cairns of the different clans who gave their lives in vain for Prince Charlie, I was with Basil all alone, for those wretched Vannecks would go off by themselves, as usual, in the most marked way. He made me wipe my eyes with his handkerchief, and then folded it up to 'keep forever.' He does choose the strangest places to make love, and always contrives the minute the others go away, to bring the subject round to that. Luckily we are all four together in the car, as the chauffeur drives, but even there he looks at me, which is quite getting on my nerves. Yesterday I asked to sit in front, saying I wanted more air. It was after leaving Inverness; and I had the best of it, quite by accident. It was a horrid road, almost the only bad one we've had; full of flat holes which the chauffeur called 'pans,' and the others, in the back of the car, nearly had their spines come through the tops of their heads. Strange what a difference there is, sitting in the driver's seat! The bumping lasted all the way to Drumnadrochit,

where we turned away from a long, straight loch to mount up into lovely strange country; then plunged down a steep hill to Invercannich — a charming place ringed round with lovely, mysterious-looking mountain-peaks which seem to say 'If we chose, we could tell you the secret of Glen Affric, which we are hiding.'

"Isn't that an alluring name — Glen Affric? A little while ago I should have wanted immensely to see it; but now whenever any one proposes walking through a glen I always argue that it would be better not.

"Last night we stopped at Strathpeffer, a gay and beautiful little cure-town, which is like a walled flower-garden set down in the midst of wild and stern Caledonia. The mountains are the walls; and heather flows round them and beats against them like a purple ocean. It is so foreign looking that it reminded Basil of Baden Baden. Now we are going on into Ross-shire, which Basil describes as a country of moorlands and great spaces where red deer live. But already we have seen deer walking quite calmly out of the forests on to our road, where they stop to gaze quizzically, without the least fear, at the car. It is almost as if they took it for a brother-animal. To-night we shall be at Loch Maree, and of course you won't get this in time to telegraph there. But perhaps you might wire to Ballachulish, where we shall be to-morrow. Do, dearest, and tell me to come back to you. In spite of all the loveliness, I can't stand this much longer, for I cannot make Basil stop without being really *rude* to him. You needn't keep me more than a day if it's inconvenient. I'll go anywhere afterward —except to Grandma's. Or even there, if she'll have me back! — Your loving and anxious BARRIE."

TELEGRAM TO BARRIE FROM MRS. BALLANTREE MACDONALD

"If you want to please me and be very happy yourself say 'Yes' to B. N. Splendid thing for you. Could wish nothing better for your future. Do relieve my mind by writing that you have decided. Yours lovingly and hopefully, BARBARA."

LETTER FROM BARRIE TO HER MOTHER

"DEAREST: Your telegram gave me the most dreadful surprise when I arrived here at Ballachulish, and everything else seemed against me too, for there was a wire from Mr. Bennett's sister asking Mr. and Mrs. Vanneck to make their visit to her as soon as possible, at that shooting lodge you told us about. They wanted to go, and I was the only thing that prevented them. If I had an *enemy* trying to push me into a corner this would have seemed like his (or her) work — just as if it had been planned on purpose. But, of course, that idea is nonsense. Basil said, 'Now, if you could only care a little, and make up your mind to wait for the love, we could be married at once, because I believe it's still easy to do these things quickly in Scotland.' But I told him I didn't feel as if I could, even to please Barbara, though I liked him very much. And I began to think that, after all, I should have to go back to Carlisle and beg Grandma to take me in, when who should come teuf-teufing up to the hotel but Mr. Somerled in the darling Gray Dragon. I could have cried with joy. It was like a miracle, because, though I thought he might come along some time, I wasn't expecting him then, any more than you would expect manna to

fall in 1912 just because you happened to be hungry and lost.

"You will be surprised perhaps at my feeling that I was saved from Basil and Grandma simply because Mr. Somerled happened to turn up at our hotel in his motor-car. But I haven't told you all yet. He wasn't alone. He had collected Duncan MacDonald and Miss MacDonald, and he'd come to Ballachulish looking for us. I must confess to you now that I wrote to him twice or three times, which was only polite, as he'd been so kind about rescuing me before. And you hadn't forbidden me to write. One of the things I told him in a letter was about the visit to Mrs. Payne the Vannecks might be making: and it occurred to him that some such complication as this might arise. He thought if Mr. and Mrs. Vanneck wanted to go to the Round House, it would be very nice for me to join my cousins (of course the MacDonalds are my cousins) until you are ready for me to come back to you. Or else I could go and stay at Dunelin Castle at Dhrum, for they are willing to visit him there if I do. It has been let to him for years, you know. As the MacDonalds are poor he was afraid, if he didn't take the castle, they might let or even sell it to some vulgar rich person who would spoil the island he loves. Now he may buy it himself: for Duncan MacDonald has no son, and the daughter is so plain and old that she can't possibly marry. Won't it be good to have the castle still belonging to a MacDonald? And it is so romantic that it should be Ian Somerled MacDonald, whom Duncan used to despise. But perhaps you've never heard that story?

"Now, both the father and daughter are sweet to 'their

dear cousin,' and very kind to me — to please him, of course. Next to being with you, I'd rather go to Dhrum than do anything else in the world. Perhaps it will seem to you just the right thing, because I know how difficult it is to plan what to do with me for the rest of my life, unless I marry Basil. And maybe you wouldn't so much mind my not marrying him, if I had a proper place to stay for ever so many weeks, while you looked round?

"Mr. and Mrs. Vanneck haven't gone yet, but they will be starting to-morrow morning for Dundee, and from there they will go to the Round House. I am sorry to say I shan't miss them, as I did Mrs. James. Cousin Duncan and Cousin Margaret (they have told me to call them 'Cousin') don't seem Scottish at all, and so they are rather disappointing. They live in London and don't care for Dhrum, but they appear not to dislike the idea of visiting Mr. Somerled there. I believe they have often in old times visited the people to whom they let Dunelin Castle, but only when there was a very good *chef* and a gay house-party. Cousin Margaret has a large, high nose, and thin hair and a thin face and body. All her personality is thin and cold, as if she couldn't care much about anything. But she does care about women getting votes, and insists on talking politics in the midst of lovely scenery. She looks so like her father, it is quite funny, and their voices are exactly alike, slow and correct and exaggeratedly English; and Scottish history bores them. They are proud of the ancestor who ratted from Prince Charlie and fought with Butcher Cumberland, so we have nothing in common. But any port in a storm!

"I suppose I mustn't go away in the Gray Dragon till

I hear from you? Yet surely you will say 'Yes,' as it will save you trouble, without my being obliged to marry Basil. I am sorry for him, but he will soon get over it, for he loves his writing better than anything else in the world, and presently he will go back to it and forget me. I think he likes me because I would make a new kind of heroine for one of his novels, and I'm quite willing he should have me for that.

"I suppose if I go with Mr. Somerled Mrs. West will join Basil in a few days, and they will continue their tour together as if nothing had happened to interrupt it. Of course I haven't told Mr. Somerled about Basil proposing, so when he suggested my going for a short run with the Gray Dragon in memory of old times, he invited Basil too. But that was before the Vannecks had looked out trains, and decided that they couldn't get off till to-morrow. There wouldn't be comfortable room for such a crowd even in the Gray Dragon. Anyhow, Basil refused, saying he had writing to do — and I went with Mr. Somerled and the cousins to the Pass of Glencoe — you know, don't you, 'The Glen o' Weeping'?

"It is only an afternoon excursion from Ballachulish, so I was sure you wouldn't object to my deciding for myself. As for Ballachulish, it is one of the most charming little places I've seen yet in Scotland, although coming here as we did from Loch Maree it would need to be beautiful indeed, not to be what you call in the theatre an 'anti-climax.' Loch Maree lies all secret and hidden among deer forests. Along the narrow, twisting road as you go, you hear the rushing sound of many rivers. Nobody had ever even dreamed of motor-cars when that road was

made, so you have to travel slowly and manœuvre whenever you meet anything if you don't want to be killed. Even as it was, we got mixed up with a big automobile loaded with fish-baskets. Our flywheel was on the ground, running helplessly round and round, screaming horribly, while both chauffeurs abused each other. Such a funny accident, and we had another, going up a very steep hill. We'd so little petrol that it ran back, as your blood does if you hold up your hand, and the motor would do nothing but groan till we found out what was the matter. Altogether it was quite an adventure going on such a road with such a weak, elderly car like Blunderbore: but it was worth it all, for Loch Maree is the beautiful birthplace of baby rainbows. As we came near, travelling a mere white seam in a carpet of purple heather stitched together with silver streams, I saw any quantity of unfinished rainbows, just waiting to be matched on to each other like bits of a puzzle. They hovered over rivulets, dancing in the sunlight; or stained with colour the rocks thickly silvered with a brocade of lichen, or else hid suddenly in the heather which, mingling with pale green bracken, made a straggling pattern of amethyst and jade for miles along the way. Oh, it was all lovely; and we stayed a night there, at an ideal inn where fishermen engage their rooms years beforehand. A dear old waiter in the Loch Maree hotel advised me in the kindest way never, never to speak of fresh herring as fish, in Scotland. I wonder why? He said, would I have fresh herrings or eggs? I said I'd have the fish. He said there was *no fish*, but would I try the herring? That was the way the subject came up.

"We had two Highland ferries to cross, getting to Ballachulish. Strome Ferry, which was difficult and almost dangerous because there was a great storm of wind just then, and Dornie Ferry. I liked those experiences better than almost anything we have done with Blunderbore. The little ferries were so much more exciting than a huge steam ferryboat, like that on the Tay. And in the wild, lost country passing Clunie Inn, it poured with rain and wind, the gale lashing us, rocking the car like a cradle. The spattering mud made us look like hideous freckled people; and so the MacDonalds saw me first. I hope Mr. Somerled explained I wasn't like that really. We had so much arguing about Mrs. Payne's telegram and what the Vannecks should do, that we had no time to wash, and I didn't seem to care if I was never clean again. But the minute the Gray Dragon appeared I cared *fearfully*. I took great pains with my appearance before I started out with my new cousins, for Glencoe, and I felt so happy that it seemed the place ought to call itself the Glen o' Smiling instead of the Glen o' Weeping.

"Of course, however, I lost that frivolous feeling when we were there, even though it was a joy to be back with the Gray Dragon; for the Pass of Glencoe is like the Valley of Death. It is a sad mouth wide open, roaring to the sky for vengeance, biting at the clouds with black, jagged teeth; a great mouth in a dead face wet with the tears of the weeping that can never be dried. It rained while we were there, and though rain doesn't matter to the Gray Dragon, it made the Pass more wild and grim if possible, filling it with gray, drifting ghosts: ghosts of the murdered clansmen; ghosts disappearing into dark, open door-

ways of rock castles, or falling on the green floor of the glen, to weep on the dim, faded purple of the sparse heather. The river into which the weeping cataracts shed their tears was black at first; but suddenly, though the rain did not stop, the sun tore a hole through a cloud, and shot a huge rainbow into the rushing water. It split into a thousand fragments, still gleaming under the clear brown flood: and I thought it was as if the MacDonald women, in trying to escape from the massacre, had dropped their poor treasures — their cairngorms and garnets and amethysts — and there the jewels had lain ever since under the water, because no one dared fish them out. But also I thought the key of the rainbow itself might be lying there; and that made me happy again in spite of the sadness of the place: for Mr. Somerled and I used to talk when we first knew each other about finding the key of the rainbow together: and I saw by the way he looked that he hadn't forgotten. It is a compliment when a man like that remembers anything a girl says, don't you think?

"Now, dear Barbara, I must send off this letter at once, though I am going to telegraph at the same time, to ask if I may accept Mr. Somerled's invitation. I tell you frankly I don't know how I shall *bear* it if you say no. But you won't. You are too kind and sweet, and you do want me to be happy and find the key of the rainbow, don't you?

"Your BARRIE,

"Who can hardly wait."

## II

WHEN Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald received the telegram, which reached her the day before Barrie's letter, she showed it at once to Aline West. It read:

"Please forgive me for not saying 'Yes' as you wish to B. N. But I need give no more trouble for a long time, though. Mr. and Mrs. Vanneck leaving to-morrow. Mr. Somerled has arrived here with my cousins the MacDonalds from London and I am invited to make visit Dunelin Castle at Dhrum. Do please let me go, unless you can have me. They will bring me back first to see you unless that inconvenient. Have just posted you long letter, but hope you will wire answer to this.

"BARRIE."

"How simply fatal!" Barbara remarked, so calmly that Aline could have boxed her ears. But, after all, it was she who cared, not Mrs. Bal. So long as Barrie was reasonably safe and reasonably happy, and entirely out of her way (even temporarily out of her way), Barbara did not much mind about anything else. She had wanted to punish Somerled a little for his indifference, past and present, to her (almost) irresistible self: but she *had* punished him, and it had been great fun, and she was tired of bothering. Her sense of humour, a saving grace of hers, was tickled by his persistence, and this unexpected coup at

Ballachulish with the MacDonalds. She could not help chuckling when she thought how Aline (it had been mostly Aline) had manœuvred to throw that poor pretty child into Basil's arms; and how, just as she seemed on the point of succeeding, down swooped Somerled like a golden eagle of the mountains to snap the prey out of his rival's mouth. Barbara would have preferred that her daughter should marry Basil, since she must marry somebody to be got rid of, being so *dreadfully* in the way, poor pet! But luckily Morgan Bennett had at last said what Barbara wanted him to say. He had meant all along, no doubt, to say it — unless he had wavered from his true allegiance a little on that perilous evening when he first saw Barrie at the theatre. Barbara was safely engaged to him now; and though she had had to tell him that "dear little sister Barrie" would probably marry Basil Norman, she had only said "probably." She couldn't answer for the creature — one never could for anybody.

"How *like* Somerled!" she gurgled, as Aline sat speechless, with the telegram in her hand. "Now we know where he's been. He went to London and collected the MacDonald family, when all else had failed. He must be making it well worth their while, for they hate their native wilds. But then — London in *August!* I suppose they welcomed any change. My poor dear, I *am* sorry if you're fond of him, but this does look as if Somerled were tremendously in earnest. And if he is, I don't think you and I are capable of coping with him. We must let things shape themselves, I'm afraid."

Aline's eyes, well again now, sent out a flash such as Basil knew. "You're not going to fail me, are you?" she

exclaimed. Her impulse was to add shrilly, "Now that you've made your own market, and don't care a rap what happens to any one else!" As she was Mrs. Bal's guest still, and had been royally entertained, she sacrificed the momentary satisfaction. Besides, this was the last moment in which it would be safe to offend Mrs. Bal.

"Fail you? Of course not," said Barbara. "But what more can I do? I've written and wired Barrie. We both arranged, first for the Vannecks to stay longer, and then for them to go suddenly — or at least to say they were going. We've done so *many* things, I'm quite confused. And I should have *loved* Barrie to fall in love with your brother, who's perfectly charming and so *sensible* about everything. But you see, I can't force the girl. And Somerled's on the spot. What do you *want* me to do that I haven't done?"

"I don't want you to do anything," Aline answered, struggling to keep her head, "except to stand by me — and Basil. I do care for Ian. I've confessed everything to you, and your not being certain about Mr. Bennett made you so sweet and sympathetic, it was really a comfort. But I've got my brother as well as myself to fight for. One never can be sure what he'll do for himself, he's so modest, and always lets other men get ahead. If you'll stick to us, I'll start off by the first train. I fancy I'll have to go to Oban or somewhere, and hire a motor. Basil has written about ferries there are to cross. It will be terrible, alone. But if you'll stick to me ——"

"Stick to you?" repeated Barbara, hoping that Aline did not mean to put her to too much trouble. She was a little — just a little — tired of dear Aline. It had been

useful and pleasant to have her, during this time of uncertainty concerning Morgan Bennett: a nice woman to go about with; pretty, but not too pretty; young, yet not too young; celebrated, yet not as celebrated or popular as herself; but now it was all settled about Morgan; and Aline had been a tiny bit plaintive, which was boring. Also it was boring to see how stodgily George Vanneck was in love with Mrs. West, without shadow of turning, although Barbara had tried her hand, just for fun, at tempting him to turn. Even a worm would; but George Vanneck wouldn't, which made him seem so slow! And Mrs. West was a woman with only two smiles, and no real sense of humour.

"All I mean is," Aline explained, uneasily feeling that she had lost her power, "will you send me as your representative to Barrie? I *can't* let Ian think I have come because of him. But you are acting, and can't possibly get away, so — as we're friends now, it would seem only natural for me to go in your place."

"What will you do when you get to Ballachulish?"

"I'll give Barrie several reasons for marrying my brother, and if you'll let me speak for you as well as for him and myself, I'm almost sure I can — can save her from Somerled."

At this Barbara frankly laughed, the way of putting it seemed so quaint; and as for herself, she was feeling extraordinarily happy. She had got what she wanted from life. She had got Morgan Bennett. And at the end of the week he was going to America for a month, which was nice, because while feeling perfectly safe about the future, she would be able to have a little rest cure, without

bothering to be agreeable to him. He was fascinating, but strenuous. And if she need not have Barrie staying with her after all, she could accept a charming invitation for Sunday and part of Monday in the adorable Trossachs. It was the Duchess of Dalmelly who had asked her, and she had thought she must refuse because Barrie was due in Glasgow on Saturday evening. She had not felt like putting off the child again, as Morgan would be gone; yet the Duchess did not know that Barrie existed, and Barbara didn't want her to know. Why not let things arrange themselves, and Barrie go to Dunelin Castle with the MacDonalds? The Duchess was said to have wonderful house-parties, and the Duke's place near Callander was famous. Barbara had never been invited before and would like to go, especially as the fiancée of a millionaire. It would give her new importance.

"Oh, well, you must do as you like," she said easily to Aline, "but don't fuss *too* much. What is to be, will be, you know."

"Yes, I know," Aline answered dryly. "And now I'll look up trains."

## III

ALINE induced Mrs. Bal to telegraph Barrie, "Await my messenger"; nevertheless the girl was greatly surprised to see Mrs. West. She had vaguely thought that Barbara might send one of the red-headed maids, to take her back to Glasgow.

Of course Basil must have known, but he had not told. Since Somerled and the MacDonalds came, he had kept to himself with his writing as an excuse. Now Barrie realized that certainly he had been expecting his sister; yet he had not gone to meet her with his car. Perhaps there had not been time: or perhaps he had an inspiration, and could not tear himself from work, even for a few hours.

When Aline arrived at Ballachulish, Barrie and Somerled and Margaret MacDonald were walking together by the side of fair Loch Leven. Barrie wore a white dress and no hat. The late afternoon sun was dazzling on her hair, and as Somerled looked at her, across Miss MacDonald (it was like Margaret to walk between them), there was an expression on his face which made Aline feel capable of desperate things. A child like Barrie to win him away from her so easily! There was something wrong about the world. Aline yearned to right it, and live happily ever after. She had travelled all night by train, and had been hours in a motor-car, never once noticing the scenery; and instead of being enchanted with

Connel Ferry had regarded the crossing as a vexatious delay. Some of the most beautiful scenes in Scotland had passed before her eyes between Oban and Ballachulish; but if she thought of such things at all, she thought that even a romantic writer couldn't be expected to notice irrelevant trifles like nature, when bound up heart and soul in her own private romance.

Somerled wondered how he could possibly have found her face interesting. He did not know which of her two smiles had less genuine human nature in it, the sad one or the gay one. And he wondered for the first time if Basil didn't write the best part of their books.

"I've come in a great hurry on an important mission from Mrs. Ballantree MacDonald to Barrie," she explained to Somerled rather than to the girl, as she got stiffly out of the motor-car. She was almost pathetically anxious not to produce the impression that this frantic journey had been undertaken on Ian's account. If she failed, she would put George Vanneck out of his long misery by marrying him. She would even say that they had been secretly engaged for some time. Anything rather than Somerled should suspect the truth. But she was going to try hard not to fail.

"I'll see Basil presently," she said when Barrie asked if they oughtn't to let him know. It occurred to Somerled that Aline did not want to meet her brother before strangers. "Let me just get rid of this hired motor-car — and then I must fulfil my mission before doing anything else. Basil and I will have plenty of time together. I've finished my visit to Mrs. Bal. Dear child, may I have a

little talk with you in your own room, and give you your Barbara's message?"

Barrie was eager, yet frightened. She could hardly wait to hear what was her mother's verdict on the Plan; but it seemed ominous that she was to learn it through Aline. Nothing good had come to her so far through Mrs. West.

Barrie's room was small, and looked over a dovecote. The doves were mourning a good deal more than was reasonable considering that their griefs must have happened generations ago. Their continuous cooing rasped Aline's nerves. How would it be best to begin? She had planned it out a dozen times in the train, and a dozen times more in the car: but a few doves and a disturbance in an unseen family of chickens were enough to put everything out of her head. Suddenly she began to cry. That was not a part of her design; but no inspiration could have been more useful. The pretty, serene mask of her smooth face wrinkled up pitifully, and made her seem real and human. Barrie's heart warmed to her for the first time.

"Oh, Mrs. West, what is it?" she exclaimed. "Nothing has happened to moth — to Barbara?"

Nothing that happened to any one except herself could have drawn tears from Aline West, but Barrie did not know that.

"I am so — horribly unhappy!" wailed Aline, hiding her distorted face in her hands. There was no time to fumble for a handkerchief.

"Is there anything I can do?" Barrie asked.

"There is — everything!" Aline choked. She began to

realize from the girl's agitated voice that the accident of her own tears had been providential. "But you won't do it when you know."

"I will, indeed — if I can," Barrie warmly protested.

"You have taken Ian away from me," Aline sobbed. "He was mine till you came. I worshipped him, and he loved me. He loves me still, but we quarrelled — about you. I was jealous — I confess. You are so young. I'm — thirty. He said he cared nothing for you in that way — that you were only a child; but he'd promised you to take you to Edinburgh and be a sort of guardian, and nothing would induce him to break his word. I was foolish — I tried to make it a test with him. I said if he loved me he would tell you he'd changed his mind, that he couldn't take you. But he wouldn't be persuaded, and so we quarrelled. Everything has been wrong between us since. He is so proud and hard! And my heart is breaking."

"I am sorry — very sorry," Barrie answered in a queer, level voice, without any expression in it. "Did you come here to tell me this?"

"No, oh, no," Aline said quickly. "I came from your mother. I was to tell you that she's going to marry Mr. Bennett, and that she hopes still that you may make up your mind to accept my brother who loves you so much, before Mr. Bennett comes back from America. He's going in a day or two — for a few weeks. You know, it is so awkward for Barbara. If he should find out that — little secret she's kept from him! He's rather a strange man. He can be hard. She's afraid of him. She couldn't come to you herself, and she dares not have you

back because Mr. Bennett is still there, and if he sees you — but you understand, don't you? I offered to come. We are great friends, she and I. But — I wanted to come for myself too. Ian is so terribly obstinate. He made up his mind that you needed his help, and that he'd stand by you whatever happened. It is his boast that he's never broken his word, nor failed any one. Even his love for me wouldn't make him give up — and he won't give you up while he thinks you are alone and needing a friend. See what he has done for you! He has gone and fetched these MacDonalds. I knew something had happened because his chauffeur was wired for, to meet him somewhere, but it was a blow to hear from Barbara that he'd followed you. She showed me your telegram. I almost lost hope then, that anything could ever come right between Ian and me. But when she asked me to see you, I thought — it seemed just possible, if I could make you understand ——"

"Please tell me," Barrie said, still in that strange, dry voice, unlike hers, and very old sounding for a young girl, "please tell me exactly what you thought I might do — when you'd made me understand?"

"I thought you might feel that the only way to free Ian Somerled from his supposed duty would be to marry some one else quickly. You know he blames Barbara; but if you had a husband, you wouldn't need a guardian any more. Then, if I asked him to forgive me — and I would ask him, for I've no pride left! — he might come back. I believe he'd be glad to come back, for we loved each other dearly before you parted us!"

"That is true," said Barrie; "if I marry some one else

he will be — released. I didn't know what trouble I was making for him."

"No, you didn't know, of course, for *he* couldn't tell you," Aline agreed. "But now you do know. Oh, the only way, if Ian is to be made happy again in spite of himself, is for you to marry Basil. Think how happy you will make him too! And Barbara. Every one will be happy, and all through you."

"I'll see Basil and talk to him," said Barrie.

"You *will?* You little angel! But I must see him first and prepare him. Are you going to do what we all want? Even Ian wants it at heart, though he doesn't know it yet, for it would be such a relief for him to feel you were all right, and he — could go back to — old times."

"I'd marry Basil to-morrow, if I could," Barrie replied.

"Perhaps you can," Aline said, radiant, drying her tears.

. . . . . .

Basil persuaded himself that he would have been less than man if he refused to accept his happiness, even though he could have wished it to come to him spontaneously. But nothing, as Aline anxiously reminded him, can be ideal in this world. And it wasn't as if it were certain that Somerled would have married the girl if they had been let alone.

"We shall never know now what he *would* have done," she said, "and I for one don't want to know. I want to know only what he will *do*. Even if he has been a little — infatuated, why, you told me yourself that hearts are often caught in the rebound. I shall try so hard."

"But you are going away with us!" Basil said quickly. "You must."

"Oh, I will. I wouldn't trust you alone — to keep Barrie. But afterward I shall write him a letter. Such a letter! Of course, we've all three quite decided now" (it was she, and Basil reluctantly, who had decided) "merely to tell him that we're obliged to take Barrie back to her mother; that Mrs. Bal would hear of nothing else. And it won't be a lie, because as soon as you're married, you will take her to see Barbara. Morgan Bennett will be gone, so Mrs. Bal won't mind — much. Have you decided where the wedding is to be?"

"Gretna Green," Basil answered with such prompt decision that Aline was surprised.

"Why Gretna Green? It's such a long way," she objected, impatient for the afterward, which was to be her reward. "I thought one place was as good as another in Scotland nowadays, and that ——"

"I've a special reason for wanting to be married to Barrie at Gretna Green," said Basil, almost fiercely. "For one thing, she's told me that it used to be a dream of hers. For another ——"

"For another?"

"No matter. Only a fancy of mine — to rub out the recollection of something I don't like. Of course, if Barrie objects — but I hope she won't."

Barrie did not object in words. Only her heart rebelled. But her one great wish was to put her heart to sleep. And nothing else mattered. Nothing else must matter now.

## IV

### BARRIE WRITES AGAIN

THIS never was a story. I wrote things down, to please myself, just as they happened. But now that the end of the heather moon has come, I must write of its last days. I think by and by I shall send all this to Mrs. James, in California, otherwise she will never understand how everything came about; and besides, if it hadn't been for her the end would have been very different.

This part will have to be a sort of confession. When I began to write, I used not to say much about my feelings, even when I was sure of them, which was seldom; but I see now that I fell in love with my knight the minute I saw him first. I must have been fascinated, or it would not have occurred to me to choose him as the man to buy my brooch. I might have spoken to some one else. By the time we started on our trip and got as far as Gretna Green, I *worshipped* him. That is why I was so happy. I never troubled then about what the end would be. I just gave myself up to being happy, and it seemed as if such happiness must last forever. I used to wonder why I wasn't more impatient to get to Edinburgh and see my mother — the one thing I started out to do. But it was because I'd fallen in love with my knight, and he was already more important for me than any one else in the world, more important even than Barbara.

Soon I began to suspect what was happening; and in Edinburgh I was quite, *quite* sure. But I wasn't any longer perfectly happy. There were clouds over the heather moon — that sweet, kind moon which I used to say was the best of the year for falling in love.

I stopped writing then, for if I had written it would have had to be all about my feelings. The world was full of them. They were like gulls wheeling round a lighthouse lamp; and my heart was the lamp.

I thought, in Edinburgh, that my knight didn't care for me as I did for him. He kept away, and let other men go with me everywhere. Now I understand why, but then it made me miserable, for I knew he was the One Man, and always would be. A girl who had once loved him could never look at any one else. There were other things too that made me sad. Nobody wanted me. People were always planning how to send me away: but the heather moon shone in spite of all, and each evening when she came up, out of the mysterious places where she hides, she seemed to say: "Courage. Have faith in me. Don't lose hope, and I'll show you yet where to find the rainbow key." So I wouldn't lose hope; and I felt rewarded when my knight asked me to write to him, and promised that by and by I should see him again.

Then a letter came, and though I couldn't think why he had gone back to Carlisle to call on Grandma, I felt it must be for a reason connected with me; and that was cheering — just to know that I was in his mind. About London — when he went there afterward — I wasn't so sure. But it was the happiest day in my life when he suddenly appeared at Ballachulish. He came just in time, it seemed, to save

me as he had saved me before. I could hardly keep from showing how I adored him. As he had come such a long way and had done so much for my sake, I thought that perhaps after all he did care, though it seemed too wonderful to be true. Now and then, while we were waiting to hear what Barbara would say about the invitation to Dhrum, there was a look in his eyes that made me feel the heather moon had been my true friend. He was changed, too, not hard and cynical as he used to be, but kind and gentle to every one, as if he had begun to see what a beautiful place the world can be.

This made it worse when Mrs. West came, and explained that all he had done for me was for duty, not for love: that he loved her, and I had spoiled everything for them both. Mrs. West said that he would stick to his duty at all costs, until I was actually married, so I was glad then, instead of sorry as I had been before, that Basil wanted me. I saw that she was right, and the sooner it was over the better. But I didn't dare think about the future. I just went on blindly, and did what Basil and Mrs. West told me to do. Nothing seemed to matter except to show my knight that after all my selfishness and thoughtlessness and conceit I had freed him.

I would rather have been married anywhere than at Gretna Green, but Basil had set his heart on that place.

We told my knight that Barbara was making me go away at once with Mrs. West and Basil; or rather, I let them explain. I couldn't. I was afraid I should break down, and he would see how wretched I was. It was all I could do to say "good-bye." It nearly killed me to see

the hurt, surprised look on his face. Even now I can hardly write of that.

Basil had found out about the marriage laws. We had been in Scotland for three weeks, and all we had to do, if we wanted to be married in a hurry, was to declare before two witnesses who knew us both, that we took each other as husband and wife. We could have done it just as well at Ballachulish if Basil hadn't been determined it should be Gretna Green; but afterward I thought that he, or perhaps Mrs. West, had felt it would be better to have the wedding far away from my knight, who called himself my guardian, and might consider it his duty to object.

Mrs. West was to be one of the witnesses, and, as Barbara couldn't leave the man she was engaged to, the very last day before he sailed, Basil thought we had better have Salomon the chauffeur for the second witness. Mr. George Vanneck might have come on from Glasgow, but I heard Mrs. West say to Basil, when he suggested telegraphing, "I don't want to see him just now, and especially at the time of a wedding. He might be unreasonable."

As we needed Salomon, we went all the way in the car, instead of taking the train from Oban, which would have saved us a few hours.

When we got to Gretna Green it was evening, but the daylight lingered still. In the south it would already have been gone. There was a pale dusk mingling with the moonshine, and I couldn't help remembering the mysterious light in Sweetheart Abbey, on my first night of Scotland and the heather moon. I remembered my dream, too, the dream of the locked ebony and silver box, which

could be opened only by the key of the rainbow. It nearly broke my heart to think of these things, and I wished it *would* break, so that I might die instead of marrying Basil: for if I were dead I should be safely out of everybody's way, just the same as being married.

Basil asked me where it was that we had gone through the ceremony for the photographs, but before I had time to answer, the car brought us to the house, and he recognized it from the biograph pictures. He told Salomon to stop, and leaving Mrs. West and me in the car, he got out to talk with the man of the house. Up till that moment I had been dully wishing it were all over, and had been actually in a hurry; but suddenly I felt as if I couldn't bear being married, and should have to run away. I longed and almost prayed for something — anything — to happen which would put off the wedding until another day. If an earthquake had wrecked the house I should have been delighted. But nothing did happen. Mrs. West talked cheeringly to me while Basil was gone, saying how happy I should be all the rest of my life, and what a lovely honeymoon her brother was planning. "I shall go away and leave you to your two selves," she said; and though I'm afraid I almost hated her, still I longed to cry out, "Oh, *don't* go away!"

In a few minutes Basil came back, looking excited and rather happy, yet there was that curiously pitiful, apologetic expression in his eyes which had been in them always lately, as if he were ashamed and sorry about something.

"It's all right," he explained. "The man tells me we can be married here, and it's not too late. He says a good many people come even nowadays, simply for the romance

of having their wedding at Gretna Green." Then Basil gave his hand to me, to help me down from the car. I felt very weak, and almost sick. How different from the day when my knight and I had dashed up to this door in the old-fashioned chaise, and played the game of being married at the anvil! How my heart beat as he held me for an instant in his arms! I ought to have known then that I was in love with him. Now, it was as if my heart were dying, for it felt cold and heavy as lead, as I told myself that after this it would be wrong to call Mr. Somerled "my knight," or even to think of him at all, since to think was to love.

Mrs. West got down from the car too, and took off her veil. Basil explained to Salomon what it would be necessary for him to do, and how he must leave his motor for a few minutes.

My knees trembled so that I could scarcely walk. Basil noticed it, and insisted on my taking his arm. "It's because she has been sitting still in the car so long," Mrs. West said to him hastily. "I am often like that after a day's motoring."

"You're awfully pale," said Basil, staring at me anxiously. "You won't faint or anything, will you?"

"Oh, no," I said. "I am quite well." I tried to speak naturally, but my voice sounded as if it were some one else's, miles away. And for a minute, after entering the little room that looked so familiar, I was afraid that I might cry or be somehow stupid.

'Now," said Basil, "all we have to do is to state before these witnesses that we take one another in marriage. Isn't that it?" he asked, turning to the old man, who in

the costume brought by the photographers, had performed the ceremony over me and my knight.

"Yes, sir, that is all there is to it," he replied; but as he spoke he was peering curiously at me. "That's all there is to what we call an irregular marriage in Scotland, such as this is going to be. When I say 'irregular,' you mustn't think anything wrong. It's as legal as the kind with banns. If you want to register your marriage, sir, you must make application to the sheriff of the county; but it's just as binding and legal without."

"That is what I understood," said Basil. "But, of course, I shall have it registered. Are you ready, Barrie?"

"Excuse me the liberty, sir," broke in the old man, "but I think this will be the young leddy who was done for the Cinema? I know her by her hair. I'm not so sure, though, that I recognize you, sir, or ——"

"No, no, it wasn't I. That was her guardian," Basil returned hurriedly. "Now, Barrie, if you're ready ——"

"Yes, I'm ready ——" I began. I found that I could speak only in a whisper. Or perhaps it was the whirr of a passing motor outside which drowned my voice.

"Well then, come, dearest child, and stand here by me. Give me your hand —— Is anything the matter?"

I forgot to answer, the sound of that car out there was so like the well-remembered purr of the Gray Dragon. But I seemed always to be hearing a kind of undertone of Dragon music. Often I had turned my head as we came from Oban, to see if some car gaining on us from behind were the Gray Dragon. It never was; and this would not be. But it was not passing after all. It was stopping near the house — as near as Blunderbore would allow.

"Is anything the matter?" I heard the words more clearly the second time he spoke.

"No," I said. "There is nothing ——"

He took my hand, which was hanging by my side, for I had forgotten to give it when he asked. His felt very hot to the touch, so mine must have been cold. He pressed it warmly, and his eyes called to mine. There was no light in the room, for it was not needed yet, and I could see that his face was white. I wished above all things to pull my hand away from him.

"I, Basil, take thee, Barribel ——" he began formally.

"I forbid this marriage. It mustn't go on," said a voice at the door. It sounded like the voice of my knight: but everything was so dream-like and unreal that I thought the voice was part of the unreality. It could not be his.

But it was. He came forward, covered with dust from head to foot, as if he had been driving far and fast.

"Barribel MacDonald is already my wife," he said.

He took my hand away from Basil, who was so astounded that for an instant he did not resist. But in another second a flood of rage seemed to sweep over him, giving him strength and presence of mind.

"That's not true, and you know it!" he exclaimed, while Mrs. West stood still as a statue, looking suddenly years older than before. "Barrie, come to me."

But my knight would not let me go. He grasped my hand so tightly that it hurt. I felt as if my fingers would break in his, and for just that moment I was deliriously happy, until I remembered, with a sharp pain like an icicle in my heart, that he loved Mrs. West.

"It *is* true," he said. "We went through the marriage ceremony here, three weeks ago, she and I, as this man will tell you. I am a Scot, and I claim her as my wife by the law of Scotland, unless she will swear to me now, before God, that she loves you and wants you fo her husband. If she can swear that, I will take steps to release her. What do you say, Barrie?"

"I — I *like* Basil very much," I stammered. "I was willing — I am willing — to marry him."

"I didn't ask if you liked, but if you loved, him. Do you?"

"I — I want to marry him," I exclaimed, strength flowing into me as I thought of Mrs. West. "Don't be afraid, Mr. Somerled. I've troubled you enough. Even if we really are married, I would rather die than hold you. I know everything — how it was about me you quarrelled with *her*. But I've spoiled only a few weeks of your life. I won't spoil the rest. It is she who ought to be your wife, not I."

"Who has said that to you?" he asked.

"It is her own idea!" Mrs. West cried.

"Then it is a very foolish idea," said he. "Mrs. West and I never had it. If you love Basil Norman, Barrie, I won't stand in your way. But if you don't love him, by heaven he shan't take you from me."

"There's no question of taking her from you. She doesn't belong to you," Basil flung back at him. "For a marriage to be legal one of the persons concerned must have lived in Scotland for twenty-one days ——"

"I lived in Scotland seventeen years."

"But not directly before that foolish business here——"

"I have never been without a holding in Scotland. Dunelin Castle has been mine by lease for years. Now it's mine by right of ownership. Whether our marriage was legal or not will have to be settled by Scottish Law before the girl can marry any one else, and I shall fight in the courts for my rights if you dispute them."

"Are you going to throw me over, Barrie?" Basil asked.

"You shall not put it to her like that!" said my knight. "Barrie, you haven't answered my question. Do you love him?"

"No," I faltered. I could not lie.

"Do you love me?"

"You're cruel to ask me that, when you ——"

"When you ought to have seen long ago, that I was at your feet, that I was mad for you, that you were my one thought. I tried not to be a brute as well as a fool, so I stood aside and gave all the other men who were younger, and perhaps worthier, their chance. If you had loved anybody else I'd have let you alone. But I don't think one of those men made good. Do you love me, Barrie? Answer me now, as if we were alone together?"

"Yes," I whispered.

He caught me in his arms, and kissed me on the mouth, holding me close against his breast.

"Then," he said, "I am your husband. Are you my wife? I ask you before these witnesses, who know us both."

"I am your wife," I repeated after him.

"This time," he exclaimed, "we are safely married, and not all the world can part us now."

Basil and Aline went away before we did. Aline said

she was going to Glasgow, to tell Barbara how I had treated them, and to see the man she was engaged to marry: that it was all a mistake, if not a deliberate falsehood on my part, about her thinking Ian cared for her. Basil went with her, not saying anything at all, except:

"Good-bye, Barrie. Some day perhaps you'll understand and forgive me. I always had a presentiment that I shouldn't be able to bring it off at the last; that Somerled would cut in and snatch you away from me."

Ian suggested taking me to Carlisle, only eight miles away, to stay with Grandma until we could have a more conventional wedding. But when I said, "*Aren't* we really and truly married, then?" in a frightened voice, he said, "Of course we are, my darling child — married as fast as if by book and bell. Nothing can part us. I shall never let you go out of my sight for five minutes after this — unless you want to go."

"But I don't," I said. And a sudden thought came to me. I told him I wished he would take me to Sweetheart Abbey. If it had been appropriate to spend the first night of the heather moon there, as Mrs. James had said, it would be still more appropriate to spend the first night of the honeymoon.

We bade the old man of the house good-bye and he shook hands with us both. Ian gave him something which made him exclaim, "I thank you kindly, indeed, sir! And I must say, if you'll excuse the liberty, I never wanted the other gentleman to get her, sir. I felt in my bones there was something wrong, so I kept on asking questions to delay the thing. If I

hadn't done that, it would all have been fixed up before you came along."

"If it had been, I should have taken her away from him, anyhow," said Ian, "because she was my wife, and she couldn't have been his."

"Not *exactly* your wife, sir," the old man tried to explain, taking him literally. "But ——"

"If not in law she was in heart, and she was meant for me from the beginning of time," said Ian.

Then we went out to the dear Gray Dragon, which was white with dust, and so was dear Vedder.

"It's all right," Ian said to the stolid-looking fellow; and Vedder answered, "Hurrah to heaven, sir!" which was a very queer expression, but I liked it, and loved him for it. Basil used to say that chauffeurs are a strange new race of men, but I think they are splendid. I hoped that Ian would double Vedder's wages, and afterward he did.

We drove fast to Sweetheart Abbey, with the heather moon in the east, a sweet, pale, thin-cheeked moon, past her prime of youth, but more beautiful and kind than ever. As we flew along the empty road, the Gray Dragon purring with joy in our joy, rabbits ran ahead of us, like tiny messengers impatient to tell the good news of what had happened. Our big, white headlight turned them into bouncing, gray balls, and there were dozens of them, tearing along just in front of us sometimes, but we would not have killed or hurt one for its weight in gold.

Ian took for us at the inn the very rooms he had taken before for Mrs. James and me; and in his arms, with no lamplight but the heather moon smiling through the window at us, I told him about my dream of his bringing

me the locked ebony and silver box, which could be opened only with the rainbow key.

"It was a true dream, my darling," he said. "My heart was locked up in a box for many years, and nobody but you could have opened it, for you are *you*, and you have the key of the rainbow in your little hands. Never will the box be locked again. Now my heart doesn't need, doesn't want a box, because it is forever in your keeping."

There, at Sweetheart Abbey, in the little inn where I first began to ask myself if Ian were not the One Man beside whom all others were shadows, we told each other things and explained things that had seemed mysterious.

I told him how I had worshipped him from the beginning, and couldn't help going on to care more and more, though I feared that he liked Mrs. West, and thought of me only as a child. "But I wasn't a child," I said. "From the first minute I loved you I was a woman."

"You must have been a baby, or you would never have thought for a second that I or any man could remember Mrs. West's existence when you were there," he said scornfully. But as he was holding me very tightly in his arms, the scorn did not hurt. "How you could believe her, when she told you that what I did for you was from duty, I can't conceive. If you were the heroine of one of Basil's novels there might be some excuse for you. Heroines of stories always believe any wild thing the villain or villainess chooses to tell them, but a real girl, with brains and eyes and at least some common sense ——"

"Do you think when you're in love your common sense can stay on top?" I asked. "It seemed too good to be

true that you could love me, and she was far more fascinating than I! And you knew and liked her first, and had asked her to take a long motor trip with you: and it *was* true that you quarrelled about me. Looking back it all seemed so natural, especially remembering how you kept away from me and schemed — actually *schemed* — to have me go about with other men, why shouldn't I believe a woman *much* older than I, when she *cried* as she told me the story? Why, at this very place, after you'd been so heavenly to me in the Abbey, you were horrid next day, almost cross: and so you were often. You hurt my feelings a dozen times a day, and every other man I saw was kinder."

"Because they weren't fighting a great fight with themselves, as I was," he said, holding me a little more closely, if possible. "They, the selfish chaps, were letting themselves go. I was saying to myself, 'Perhaps I'm too old and hard for her. I'm the first man she's ever known. I must give her a chance to see and talk with others. For her own sake, I mustn't yield to temptation and try to snatch her away from the rest. Norman must have his chance. Douglas must have his chance. The American boys must have theirs —— and by Jove, you seemed to like giving it to them! You nearly drove me out of my mind."

"I thought you were being bored with me."

"You darling, adorable little idiot, as if a man could be bored with you!"

"I didn't know."

"Well, you know now. I was nearly mad in Edinburgh, but I stuck to my principles. I wanted to be sure one way

or the other. But Norman had no gratitude. He used your mother to help him against me ——"

"That was Mrs. West, I think, who used her."

"Don't defend the fellow. It was both of them. They — and James sending for his wife — drove me into a corner. But I wasn't going to be swept off the board without a struggle. I meant from the beginning to fight for you, if I saw a gleam of interest in your eyes for me, and sometimes I thought I did see it. But thanks to Mrs. Bal MacDonald, they'd got you in their clutches, those two. It suddenly occurred to me when I lost Mrs. James, to go and get your grandmother — bring her by force if she wouldn't come. I knew she had a sneaking kindness for me, as a MacDonald man. There was a queer bond of sympathy between us, which we'd both felt when we met. All our worst faults are alike. I dashed off to Carlisle — quickest way, by train, and threw myself on the old lady's mercy — told her everything. She was a trump, though perhaps her desire to help was as much a wish to thwart her daughter-in-law as anything else. She was too rheumatic to come with me in the car. I suppose it was a wild scheme! But she herself suggested my going to London to invite the MacDonalds. She thought, if I offered inducements — and she was right. It was an inspiration on her part."

"But," I broke in, "isn't it glorious not to have chaperons at all?"

He didn't answer in words. Yet he made me understand in a far more emphatic and satisfactory way, that he agreed.

"You can imagine what I felt when you coolly went off

from Ballachulish with Norman and his sister," Ian went on. "Then I *did* think it was all up — that I had been a fool for my hopes and my pains, till dear old Vedder hummed and hawed and apologized for taking a liberty, and mentioned that Salomon had boasted he was going to get his 'party' to Gretna Green in the shortest time on record. 'It's a plot!' I said to myself, as Mrs. James had warned me. And five minutes later Vedder and I and the Gray Dragon were off at a pace — well, I'm afraid we exceeded the legal limit most of the way; but the gods looked after us."

"And so did the heather moon!" I added.

. . . . . .

Now we are at Dhrum, our own dear purple island set in a sea of gold; but first we went back to Carlisle and visited Grandma; and to please her and Ian, I consented to be married all over again, in church, with a special license and everything such as the conventional bride does, though it seemed treacherous to that happy moment at Gretna Green, which was like heaven after the valley of death. Grandma was wonderful to Ian, and very nearly nice to me. Not an unkind word did she say of Barbara, and she didn't even refer to my running away.

"You have had the sense to choose a real man, and the good fortune to win him. I'd hardly have thought it of you. A MacDonald too!" she remarked. And I almost loved her. Mrs. Muir made us a wedding cake, which she insisted on our taking away, in a large tin box: and when we left Hillard House, Heppie's nose was pinker than I ever saw it, which is saying a good deal.

Aline West was married to Mr. George Vanneck the very day we started from Carlisle for Dhrum. We saw an account of the wedding in the paper. It was at Glasgow; and she was going to a lovely place called St. Fillans for her honeymoon. Basil gave her away, and was to return immediately after to Canada, "on business."

It is like a dream to be living in the vast, turreted gray castle of our ancestors, looking out over an endless sea, and to be the mistress of such a house — I, little Barrie MacDonald, the princess rescued from a glass retort. But it is a true dream. Ian says that he won me by a kind of fraud, as the first Somerled won his Pictish princess; because we weren't really married by that game we played with the photograph people at Gretna Green. Only, he made up his mind even then, that if the wrong man ever got a hold upon me, he would use the episode to frighten him away. How thankful I am that it happened! If it hadn't, perhaps I should have missed my happiness: but Ian says no, he would have snatched me from Basil somehow, if not in one way, then in another. Poor Basil, I can afford to remember him with forgiveness, and even a kind of tenderness now! I think he always hated himself in his heart for doing what he did. But tragedy came so near for a few hours that sometimes, if Ian is separated from me for a moment, we have to rush to find each other, and say "It's true — after all!"

At Dunelin Castle there are all the things I used to wish for: MacDonald tartan on the walls and floors of many rooms; and torn, faded MacDonald banners hanging in the dimness high up on the stone walls of the great dining-hall — where we never dine. Pipers pipe us away in the

morning, and the skirl of the pipes mingles with the crying of gulls and the boom of the sea in a thrilling way. The old servants look as if they had never been born and could never die. They are delightfully superstitious and quaint, and not one of them would kill a spider. Neither would I, for the matter of that! I suppose it's my MacDonald blood and my love of Bruce. You ought to see the elaborate precautions that are taken to ged rid of a spider in Dunelin Castle without insulting or hurting its feelings!

Ian always wears the kilt; and if I hadn't loved him as much as I possibly could before, I should have fallen in love with him all over again the day I saw him in it first. He is painting my portrait in the Gretna Green costume; and when we are tired, we take long walks together, I in a short tweed, with my hair down my back, Ian in the kilt. Our favourite tramp is to a mysterious, hidden lake, surrounded with rugged black mountains like petrified guardian-dragons watching a treasure. This wild, mountain walled lake is called the "Heart of Dhrum," and Ian says it is no more wild or savage or dark with clouds than *his* heart used to be every day when he was giving other men their chance with me. He says, too, that if the lady who used to be imprisoned in a fearful dungeon under the dining-hall at Dunelin, and fed only with salt beef, had been Aline West it would have served her right. He would have given her no sympathy, but a great deal of salt and very little beef. But of course he does not mean that. His heart overflows with kindness for all humanity nowadays, and it never was hard really. He finds the world a glorious place with very few faults; but he says it is I who have taught him this lesson, and that I should be

able to make a skeleton-ghost, condemned to clank chains in an underground prison through eternity, see his fate in a rose-coloured light. I love him to say foolish things. And I love him when he says nothing at all, but only looks at me.

He has taught me to dance the Highland fling. I do it with my hair down, while the pipers pipe; and Ian cries Hoo! and Ha! and claps his hands, as we dance, like the true Highlander he is. He was splendid in the Games Week; for he could do the great jumps and "put" the stones as well as the best of the Skye men who came over to compete with the men of Dhrum. And here at Dunelin, where we danced reels till morning, on the night of the ball we gave, he danced everybody else down — except me.

. . . . . .

This castle, which my fierce ancestors built nearly a thousand years ago, is a fairy castle for me and for Ian. It is all our own now, to have and to hold, because he has bought it, so it will belong to a MacDonald while it and the world lasts — I pray. We shall go to live in America, where I hope Barbara may let me see her sometimes; but we shall have this fairy island of purple and gold to come back to always, the hidden home of our hearts.

I used to ask myself, when the heather moon vanished behind a mountain or into the sea, in what secret place she lurked while she hid from the world? Now I know that the purple island of Dhrum is her fastness, and that because she loved us she brought us safely here, together.

I wonder sometimes if Basil will ever write his romance of our journeyings and adventures under the heather

moon — months or years from now, when he has forgotten to be sad, and is only pleasantly romantic, as when I knew him first? Ian says he will never write it, because if he did, he would have to be the villain; and no man ever yet made himself the villain of his own book. Perhaps that is true. But I do not think there ought to be a real villain in a story about a rainbow key and a heather moon.

THE END